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THE NEW YORKER

AUG. 5, 2002

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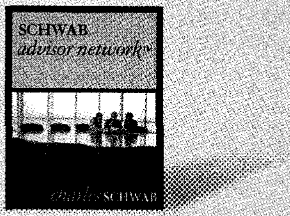

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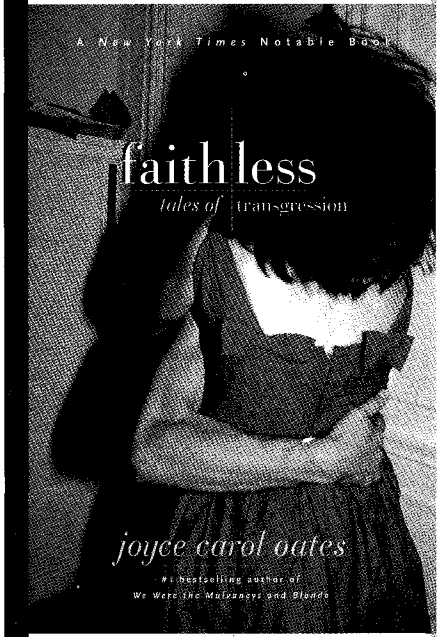

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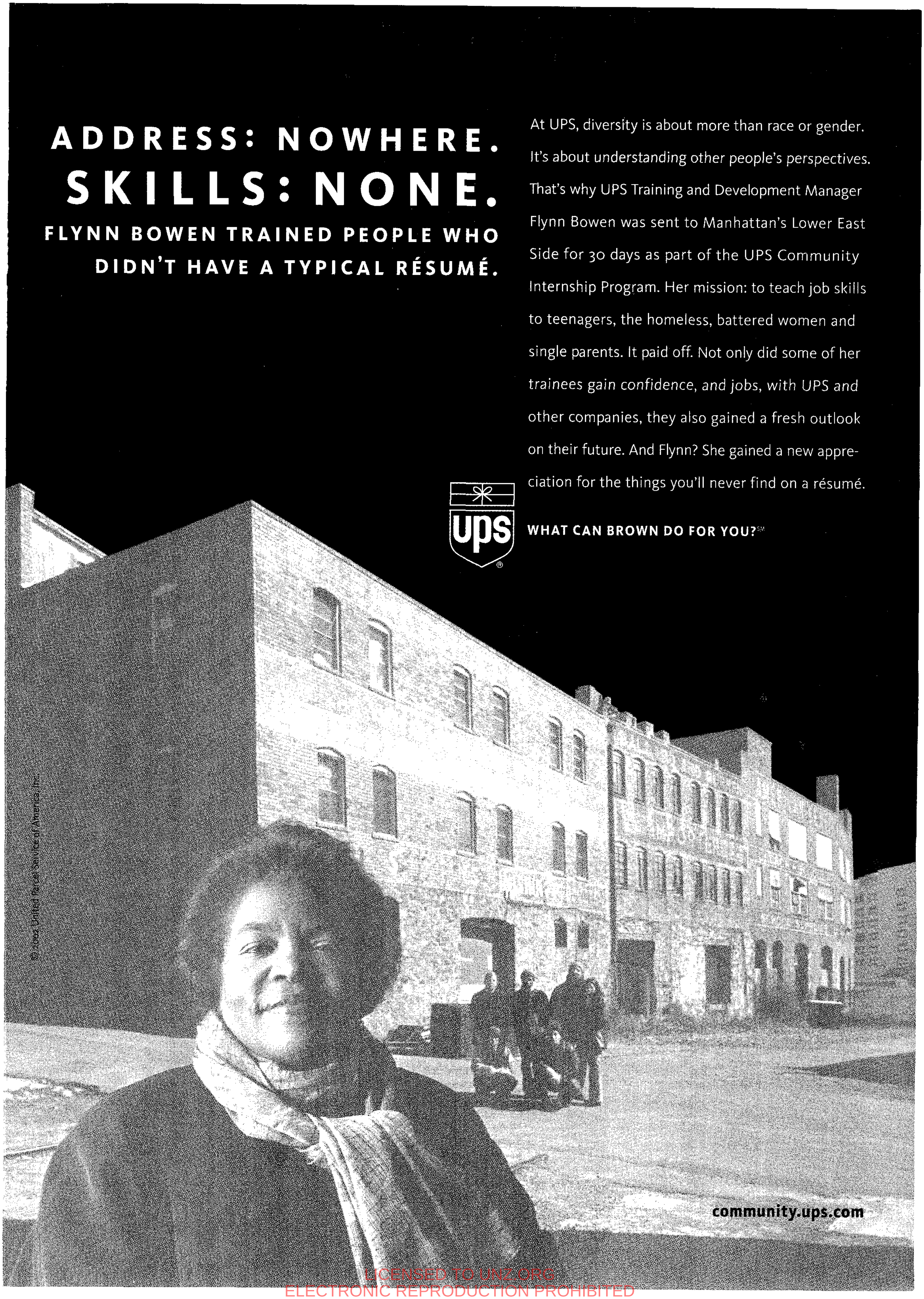

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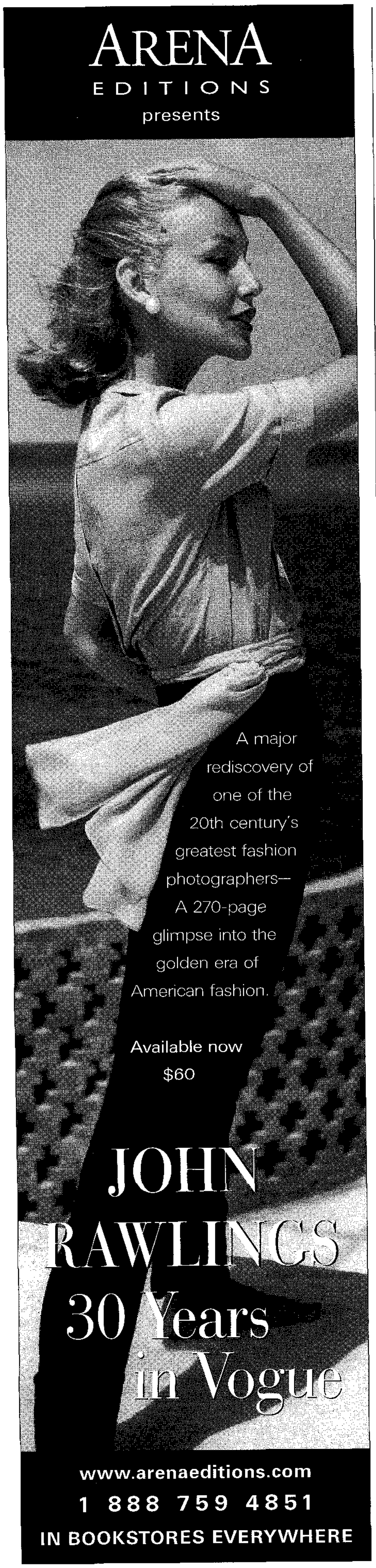
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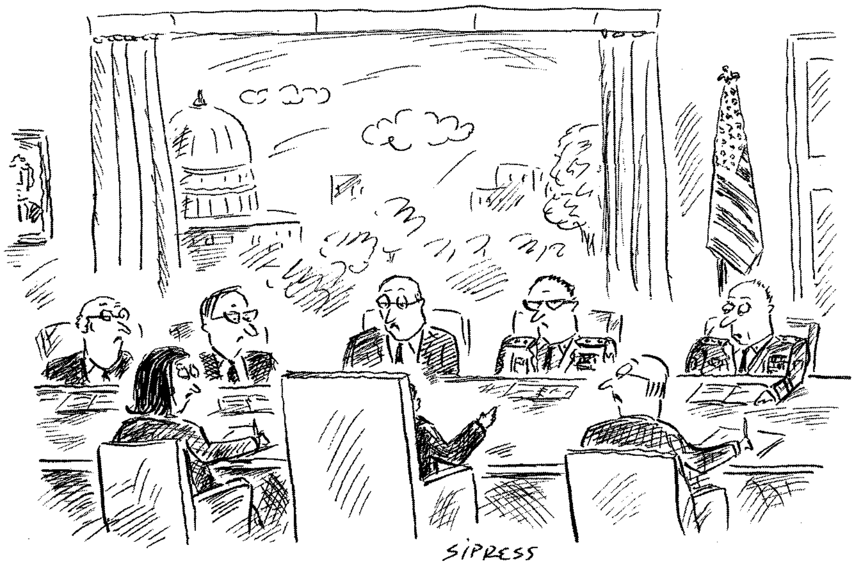

"This stock-market situation—what are the military options?"

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THE MAIL

ALLEGIANCE TO GOD

Hendrik Hertzberg argues that the "under God" phrase in the Pledge of Allegiance is probably unconstitutional, as the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found recently, but that "the harm caused by those two words has not been serious" (The Talk of the Town, July 15th). But, even before God was added to the Pledge, in 1954, it was the subject of an important court battle. In 1943, Jehovah's Witnesses challenged the compulsory salute to the flag in public schools—in the midst of the Second World War, at the height of patriotic fervor. In a landmark Supreme Court decision, Justice Robert H. Jackson spoke for the majority and ruled, "If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein." This decision helped to establish the right of students to stand or sit silently through the Pledge or to leave the room, and is a reminder that freedom of speech under the First Amendment also includes a right to remain silent, even during wartime.

Donald Parker
Port Washington, N.Y.

President Eisenhower may have been in the congregation the day the Reverend Dr. George M. Docherty sermonized that without God the Pledge sounded like something "little Muscovites" recited, but he was not "Eisenhower's Presbyterian pastor." As it happens, Eisenhower was the first President known to be baptized and received into a church after his election and inauguration. (A commentator said at the time that it might be the first public baptism of a chief of state since that of Clovis I, king of the Franks, in the fifth century.) Dr. Edward L. R. Elson, of the National Presbyterian Church—who had served under Eisenhower in Europe—baptized the President on February 1, 1953, and he became a member of Elson's church on that Sunday. I was in the congregation, having just moved to Washington to join the staff of Senator Carl Hayden, of Arizona. I knew George Docherty, but I was especially well acquainted with Dr. Elson, as he was my oldest brother.

Roy Elson
Sonoita, Ariz.

DEFENDING THE I.M.F.

A reader of John Cassidy's review of Joseph Stiglitz's book "Globalization and Its Discontents" might naturally assume that Stiglitz's stories about the International Monetary Fund are not in dispute (Books, July 15th). For example, Cassidy begins with Stiglitz's account of how he learned, in 1998, that the I.M.F. was responsible for the collapse of a Moroccan chicken-rearing enterprise because it had instructed the government to get out of the business of distributing chicks. The I.M.F. has never given Morocco any advice on chicken distribution, although it has advised against state subsidies for particular industries in many countries. Stiglitz's stories about the I.M.F. too often seem to be just stories. And too often he seems to be living in an imaginary world, where governments in financial crisis should sell more of their unwanted debt or pump out more of their money; where the transition to a market economy in Russia should have been kept on hold, in the midst of political collapse, to await the formation of market-oriented institutions; where the I.M.F. is responsible for almost all the failings of globalization; and where Joseph Stiglitz is never wrong.

Graham Hacche
Deputy Director, External Relations
International Monetary Fund
Washington, D.C.

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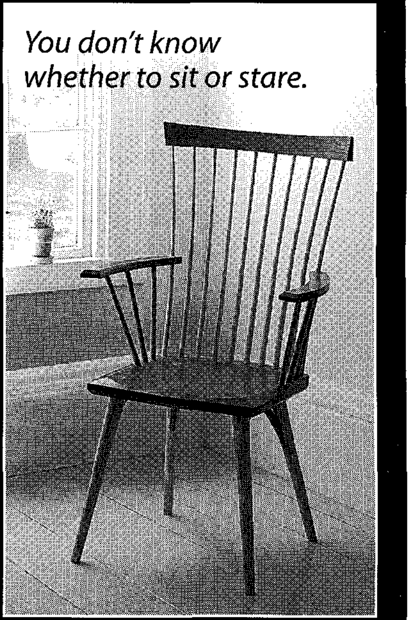
THOS. MOSER
CABINETMAKERS

You don't know whether to sit or stare.



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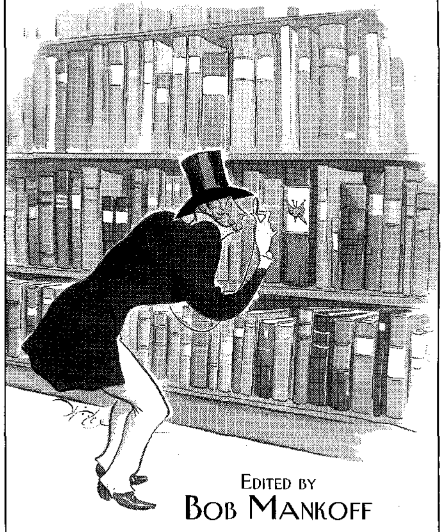

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

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THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE
Rodgers and Hart's 1938 musical, with a new book by Nicky Silver, in a Roundabout Theatre Company staging. Scott Ellis is the director. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
Edie Falco and Stanley Tucci star in Terrence McNally's 1987 play, under the direction of Joe Mantello. In previews. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

HAIRSPRAY
A new musical, based on the 1988 John Waters film, with a book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan, and songs by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman. Jack O'Brien is the director. In previews. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

HARLEM SONG
George C. Wolfe's latest is a musical history of Harlem show business from the nineteen-twenties to the present. In previews through Aug. 3. Opens Aug. 4 at 7. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

ONLY THE END OF THE WORLD
A semi-autobiographical drama by the late French playwright Jean Luc Lagarce, staged by Company Charnière. Previews Aug. 1-4. Opens Aug. 5 at 8. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 252-4437.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ALL OVER
Rosemary Harris and Michael Learned lead a well-cast ensemble in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Edward Albee's 1971 play about living with mortality. They portray the bitter wife and loving mistress, respectively, of a dying man of great wealth and social standing, who have come together at his deathbed—along with his dejected son and angry daughter (Patrick Garner and Pamela Nyberg), an old family friend (John Carter), and a very canny old doctor-and-nurse duo (Bill Moor and Myra Carter). Thanks to the fine performances, all the sting, humor, and sadness of Albee's view comes through: we're all inherently selfish, so loving the dying is often easier than loving the living. Emily Mann is the director. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

AS YOU LIKE IT
Shakespeare's comedy, transported to a contemporary inner-city environment by the Worth Street Theatre company. Jeff Cohen is the director. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 206-1515.)

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CAPITOL STEPS: WHEN BUSH COMES TO SHOVE
The Washington, D.C., comedy troupe returns to New York with their latest satirical revue. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
In the Aquila Theatre Company's excellent production of Shakespeare's intricately foolish story, the laughs are many and the delights deep. The producer-director team of Peter Meineck and Robert Richmond start with a reverence for the playwright, then employ just about any theatrical technique that will illuminate his words—among them song, dance, song and dance, dumb show, vaudeville, and burlesque. The seven cast members, led here by Mark Saturno and Louis Butelli as the two sets of twins, mix remarkable range with insane energy. Anthony Cochrane's music wittily underscores some scenes, and it fairly drives others. The setting, the Turkish port city of Ephesus, affords the opportunity for a bright and exotic production design. The costume designer, Sarah Hill, uses the inevitable fezzes and caftans, but in the world of Aquila Edwardian jackets and forties sundresses work perfectly well, too. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 239-6200.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's version. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

ELLE
Alan Cumming has adapted and stars in Jean Genet's play about a photographer sent to Rome to make a portrait of the Pope. Stephen Spinella is also in the cast. (The Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200. Closes July 31.)

ENDPAPERS
The first full-length play by Thomas McCormack, the retired C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house (St. Martin's), about choosing a successor as C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house. The play is highly literate (imagine: grammar jokes!) and full of zingy one-liners. The characters are not just types but unavoidable types: the crusty chief, the heir apparent, the office lesbian, the well-dressed hatchet, the ambitious blond assistant who is bound for glory. All are well played by an ensemble cast, under the direction of Pamela Berlin. The set, by Neil Patel, is perfect: you may feel as if you'd never left the office. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Edward Albee's ninety-minute anecdote about a happily married, successful architect who falls in love with a goat called Sylvia. It takes all of Albee's expertise to tease this joke into an evening; but it allows Mercedes Ruehl some hilarious moments of high dudgeon as she trashes the house and her husband (Bill Pullman) for "cruising livestock." David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production, starring Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson, is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/15/02.) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain who lost eight of his men on September 11th and an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives—and an admirable tribute to the men who died. (The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.)

ICE FACTORY FESTIVAL
The fifth offering in SoHo Think Tank's annual summer celebration of new works is "Sea of Love," a burlesque exploration of Wasp sexuality by Trav S. D. July 31-Aug. 3 at 7. The festival continues through Aug. 17. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 966-4844.)

I'M NOT RAPPAPORT
Judd Hirsch and Ben Vereen star in a revival of Herb Gardner's 1985 comedy. Daniel Sullivan is the director. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairy-tale-derived musical isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. The archetypal material is treated with suitable directness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

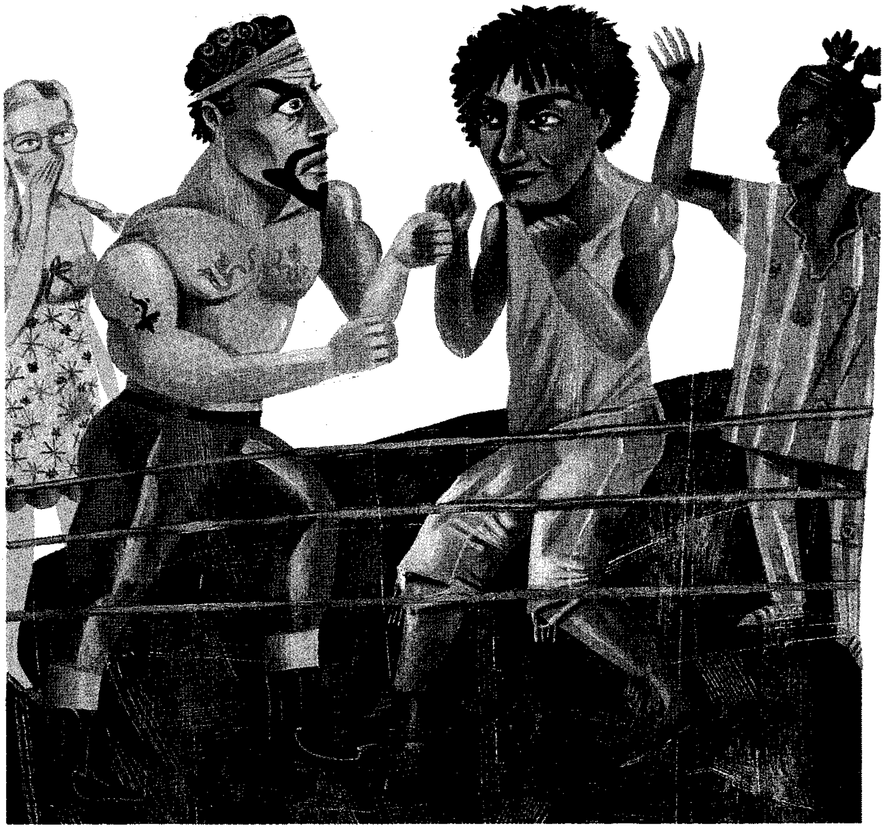
KING LEAR
Shakespeare's play, in an outdoor staging by the Classical Theatre of Harlem starring Paul Butler. (CTH Courtyard Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., at 141st St. 206-1515.)

METAMORPHOSES
Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool. The production is fun and full of wonder, but it illustrates rather than dramatizes psychic struggle. The show's gimmick, the pool, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
The Gorilla Rep's free outdoor production of Shakespeare's comedy. (Fort Tryon Park at 190th St. For more information, call 330-8086.)

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set. But technique, which can make a show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD
J. M. Synge's classic 1907 comedy about a young man lionized by a remote Irish village after he shows up in their midst with a story of having killed his abusive father—and the fallout when the father shows up only slightly bloodied. The show explores issues of reputation, love, lust, and the thrill of scandal in a surprisingly modern way, and in remarkably beautiful language. The Irish Rep cast is strong, especially Aedin Moloney, as a lonely widow. Kirk Bookman's warm lighting makes the most of David Raphael's detailed stone-cottage set. Directed by Charlotte Moore with a sure hand. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)


James Martinez and Devon Haqq, in Shakespeare's "As You Like It."

OLAF HAJEK

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

PRIVATE LIVES
In Noël Coward's comedy of bad manners, two wonderful actors, Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan, play the embattled exes Elyot and Amanda—dandies of detachment who jilt their new spouses and run away together to a Parisian love nest. Howard Davies's radical notion is to play Elyot and Amanda's physical passion for real. This allows him to capitalize on the wonderful chemistry between Rickman and Duncan, but it also throws the comedy weirdly off kilter. (5/6/02) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE
The comedian Reno goes to bed around 8 A.M.; her friends know never to call her before early afternoon. So she realized that something extraordinary was happening on September 11th when her phone started ringing just before nine. Her apartment was five blocks from the Twin Towers, and her account of the next few hours, days, and months is insightful and very, very funny. More concisely than almost anyone else has, Reno cuts to the core of many New Yorkers' complicated emotional reactions to the upwelling of blame, fear, patriotism, and heroism that has surrounded us. One part of her show consists of vaguely related passages of knee-jerk—and uncharacteristically dull—political commentary, but Reno still gives one of the clearest testaments yet to what that day was and what it's wrought for us all. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

RED HOT MAMA
Sharon McKnight portrays Sophie Tucker in a tribute to the vaudeville star. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 48th St. 935-5820. Closes Aug. 4.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled. Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422. Closes Aug. 4.)

SPANISH GIRL
Second Stage Theatre wraps up its New Plays Uptown series with a play by Hunt Holman, about a college undergrad whose former summer fling comes calling. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 246-4422. Closes Aug. 4.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Just like the 1967 movie it's based on, this musical is supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

THUNDER KNOCKING ON THE DOOR
A winning musical, by Keith Glover, set in the Mississippi Delta, about the family of the late Jaguar Dupree, a legendary blues guitarist who duelled with the Devil. (Shades of Robert Johnson.) Blessedly, the songs, by Keb' Mo' (music) and Anderson Edwards (lyrics), spring naturally and continuously from the story, which taps into myths from all over, borrowing from the Rainmaker here and leaning on Mephistopheles there, evoking everything from the Blues Brothers to that other delta, the Nile. Leslie Uggams, who is still in fine voice, headlines as the family matriarch, graciously passing the torch songs to Marva Hicks, who is terrific as her daughter, Glory. Chuck Cooper is solidly lovable in the role of Dupree's twin brother (and wooer of his widow), Dregster. If you don't know what a "cuttin' contest" is when you go in, you'll know when you come out. Directed by Oskar Eustis. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play stars Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def as a pair of brothers named Lincoln and Booth. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 11.)

TRANSPARENCY OF VAL
A new comedy by Stephen Belber, about a boy who grows up in a matter of minutes. (Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St. 539-6506. Closes Aug. 3.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
Unless you're a stodgy Shakespeare scholar (or just a bit of a pill), you're bound to enjoy the Public's outdoor staging of the Bard's romantic comedy. Maybe Julia Stiles isn't all that comfortable in her role as Viola (she's only twenty-one years old, so cut her some slack), and it's true that Jimmy Smits could be more subtle as the lovesick Orsino, but they both look fabulous, and the obvious fun that they and the rest of the cast are having is truly infectious—the crowd eats it up, which is just how Will would have wanted it. Oliver Platt and Michael Stuhlbarg, as the feckless Sir Toby Belch and his companion Sir Andrew Aguecheek, are hilarious together (Stuhlbarg is especially funny when he begins preparing for a duel). Zach Braff, as Viola's twin brother, also stands out in a terrific cast that includes Kristen Johnston, Christopher Lloyd, and Kathryn Meisle. And that Shakespeare was a pretty good writer. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750. Closes Aug. 11.)

21 DOG YEARS: DOING TIME@AMAZON.COM
Michael Daisey spent three years at Amazon during its headiest, do-no-wrong period. And now he's telling all. He's a charismatic performer, and up until the end, when he becomes a bit self-righteous, his show has the insightful hostility of the best comedy. The audience doesn't learn anything new about the dot-com bubble and its discontents, but it's fun to get the view from the inside. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

VERONIQUE
A recently rediscovered drama by John O'Hara, which satirizes life in Greenwich Village in the twenties. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 561-9635. Closes Aug. 4.)

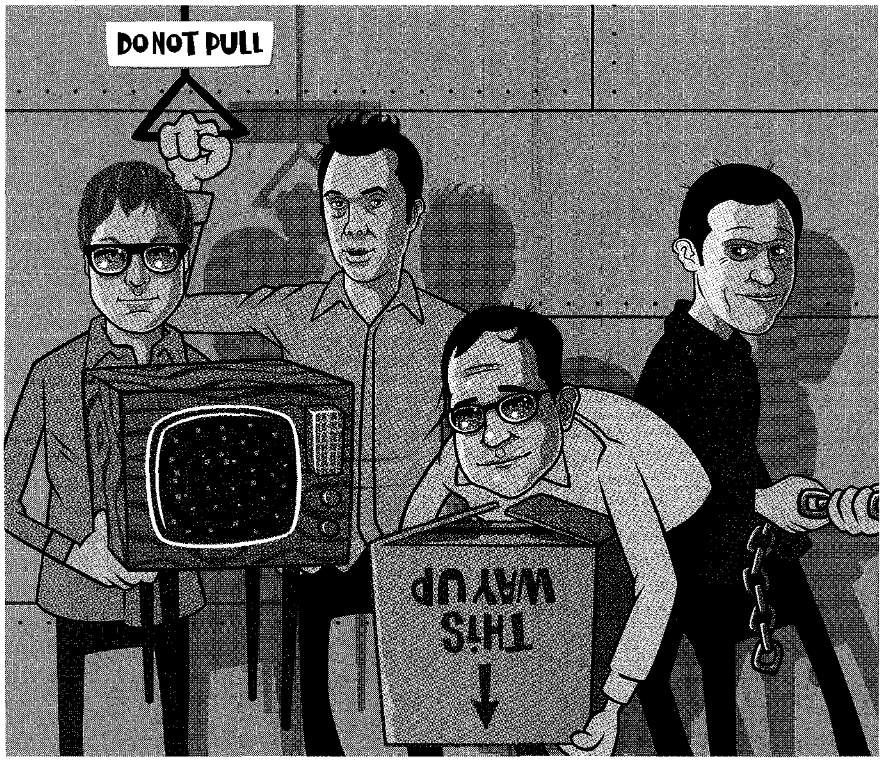
VOYAGE OF THE CARCASS
Dan O'Brien's comedy is set on an iceberg during a polar expedition gone bad. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Aug. 4.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.
CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.
DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.
NOISES OFF
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.



The Minneapolis post-punk band Lifter Puller reunites, at Brownies.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS
The annual free alfresco concert series. Aug. 6 at 5:45: Danzas Españolas. (Robertson Plaza. For more information, call 875-5108. Through Aug. 25.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH
The company returns to the theatre it helped found for its annual summer preview. July 29-30 and Aug. 5 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Pacific Dances," and "Pianola: Raven." ♦ July 31-Aug. 1, Aug. 3, and Aug. 6 at 8: "Pianola: Indigo," "Endsong," and "Behold the Man." ♦ Aug. 2 at 8: "Pianola: Indigo," "Yo Shakespeare," "Mending," and "Pacific Dances." (The Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Aug. 10.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
David Gordon and his Pick Up Performance Company share the stage with the Donna Uchizono Company. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. Aug. 2 at 8:30.)

DAVID NEUMANN AND NICHOLASLEICHTERDANCE
David Neumann, appropriation artist extraordinaire ("A friend," he says, "explains it this way: the David Neumann drawer is where the stuff that doesn't go anywhere else goes"), was getting ready to make "Deep Six," a piece about televangelists, when he had a dream. "I was drowning, descending into great expanses of water, and I discovered I could still breathe. I remember thinking, How interesting, that I'm accepting my death." Later, in his waking life, he found a pile of Artur Rubinstein 78s in the trash and brought them home to play at the wrong speed. "Slowed down like that and scratchy, the music made me think of memories drifting in and out." Which is why, in the resulting enigmatic and casually melancholic dance, the dancers occasionally stop mid-motion and look up, as if arrested by a thought. Neumann's savvy riff on club culture, "Appropriate Behavior," and works by Nicholas Leichter complete the program. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St., Brooklyn. 718-855-7882, ext. 45. Aug. 2 at 7:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL
July 31-Aug. 2 at 8, Aug. 3 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 4 at 2: Urban Bush Women. ♦ Aug. 1-2 at 8:15, Aug. 3 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 4 at 5: K. Kvarnström & Company. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
Free music in lower Manhattan. July 31 at 7: **Angélique Kidjo,** who was born in Benin and now lives in Paris and Brooklyn, is a fiery performer with a wonderful voice. (Nelson A. Rockefeller Park, Battery Park City. 528-2733.) Aug. 1 at 7: A night of alternative country with the Canadian singer (and former pop-punk drummer) **Neko Case** and **Laura Cantrell,** a Nashville native who enlivens the New York City country scene as the host of WFMU's "Radio Thrift Shop." (Castle Clinton, Battery Park. For information about the required tickets, which will be distributed at the venue starting at 5, call 835-2789.)

AREA 2
Modelled after the eclectic bills of the Lollapalooza festivals back in the nineties, this summer gathering brings together a disparate menu of acts including the ageless grande dame **David Bowie,** the Dr. Seuss-ish hip-hopper **Busta Rhymes,** and the belovedly silly performance artists in the **Blue Man Group,** along with the celebrated techno-pop of **Moby,** the tour's organizer. (Jones Beach Theatre. 307-7171. Aug. 2 at 3:30.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Aug. 4 at 3: For a while, **Cornershop** balanced cutting-edge British rock and dance sounds with elements of leader Tjinder Singh's Punjabi culture. After releasing the breakthrough single "Brimful of Asha," they metamorphosed, briefly, into the political funk band Clinton; Cornershop's latest album, "Handcream for a Generation," keeps the disco spirit alive. With **South,** a trio of young multi-instrumentalists from London whose sound is earthy and soulful—a cross between a contemporary U.K. guitar band and Neil Young in his "Harvest" phase. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 360-2777.)

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS
Free performances on the grounds of Manhattan's temple of high culture. Aug. 3 at 8: Everybody's favorite folksinger, **Arlo Guthrie.** (Damrosch Park Bandshell. For more information, call 875-5108.)

YES
The mighty progressive-rock juggernaut, representing everything that punk rock set out to destroy in the seventies, returns with the nimble-fingered keyboardist Rick Wakeman back in the fold and eager to revisit the celebrated sonic filigree of the band's "Roundabout" heyday. It's almost as if the Ramones never happened. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 3 at 8. ♦ Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Aug. 5 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—July 31: The accessible, poppy reggae of **Maxi Priest.**

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Aug. 2-3: The veteran songwriter and keyboardist **Jimmy Webb,** whose hit-filled catalogue includes such

MICHAEL WELDON

TABLES FOR TWO

BEYOGLU
1431 Third Ave., at 81st St. (570-5666)—The menu at this second-floor walkup is almost entirely devoted to the Turkish tapas-like appetizers known as "meze." The place takes its name from an old cosmopolitan quarter in Istanbul chockablock with *meyhanes*, or meze houses, and its dining room seems worlds away from the rackety stretch of the Upper East Side on the street below. The owner, Orhan Yegen, a veteran of various Mediterranean restaurants in Manhattan, might arrive at your table to announce that it would be a shame to bypass "tonight's very good, very fresh" anchovies, dressed in olive oil and vinegar, or the yogurt-rice-and-mint soup, but after that it's up to you.

Freshness is the hallmark of the tidbits at Beyoglu (pronounced BAY-oh-loo), all of which go well with peasant bread and modestly priced wine: beautifully blended hummus and tarama, tabbouleh, kibbeh (ground raw filet mignon, thickened with cracked wheat and spiked with hot red peppers), and cumin-spiced salami. Patlican salatasi—mashed-eggplant salad—adds a nice touch of smokiness, and the superb Greek salad includes sweet stuffed grape leaves and bits of artichoke. The chef could do more with the bland slabs of smoked mackerel, but the poached calf's brains, with lemon and olive oil, are delicious.

Most diners will be content to dawdle over the small dishes, the way the Turks do, but for customers who must have a main course a terrific gyro of vertically cooked, razor-thin slices of lamb and beef, served with rice pilaf, eggplant purée, and a garlic-yogurt sauce, is available. For dessert, there's a richly nutty almond pudding, and if you still want to get deeper into meze, just wave to Mr. Yegen, and he's apt to bring out, as he did the other night, two samplings of "special" ingredients. One is an almost shockingly pungent paste of fresh tomatoes; the other is a tongue-piercing purée of hot red peppers. "They both go a long way," he said. (Open daily for dinner. Meze $3-$7; entrées $12-$15.)

—*Charles Michener*

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classics as "Up, Up and Away," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," and the gloriously inscrutable "MacArthur Park."

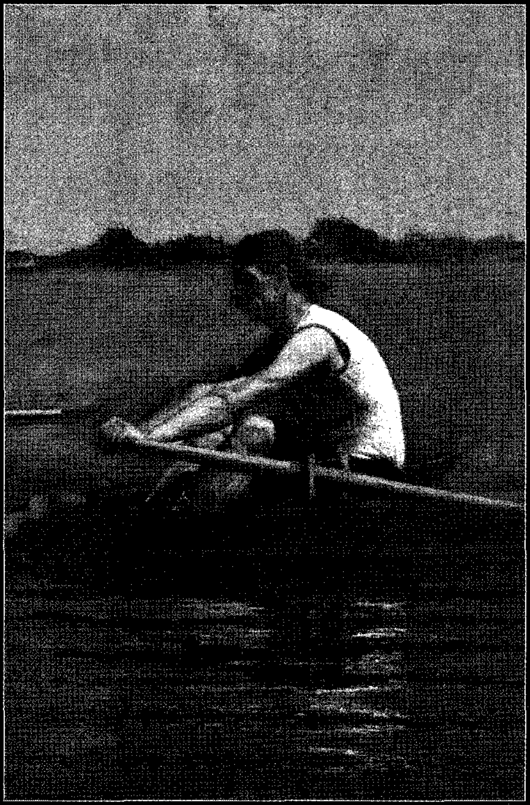
BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Aug. 1-3 and Aug. 5: Though it seems as if an ice age has come and gone since the **Breeders** released their last album, 1993's "Last Splash," the twins Kim and Kelley Deal have regrouped. The alternative-rock scene that once embraced their spiky guitar pop and sisterly harmonies may be gone, but a new and improved Breeders, fleshed out with former members of the Los Angeles hardcore band Fear, hopes to make up for lost time. With **Imperial Teen.**

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Aug. 1: The club enters its final nights of music as the legendary Minneapolis post-punk foursome **Lifter Puller** reunites for the proverbial one last show (which may or may not be their last). While Lifter Puller staunchly qualifies as a rock-and-roll band, it crafts highly allegorical songs packed with the sharpest and richest lyrics around, making music as akin to edgy hip-hop as it is to rock storytelling à la Bruce Springsteen and Tom Waits. The lead singer, Craig Finn, conjures up a rich iconography of beautifully misspent youth. In "Touch My Stuff" he sings, "we are the troubadours and these are the news reports / here we are in the holy war gettin lost in the liquor store / makin love to hardwood floors, now we go into the 4/4." Aug. 2: The versatile pop trio **A Don Piper Situation,** Mark Rozzo's inventive ensemble **Champale,** and the former D-Generation front man **Jesse Malin.** Aug. 3: Brownies closes with the straight-ahead hard rock of **NYC Smoke** and the amusing antics of **Hot Socky** (both of which are led by ex-members of the defunct alternative-rock group Thin Lizard Dawn).

CLUB SHELTER
20 W. 39th St. (719-4479)—On a bi-monthly basis for the past two and a half years or so, the much revered English electronic-music label Warp Records has taken over Electrowerkz, a concrete warehouse club in northeast London that doubles as a paintball facility by day. Nesh Nights, as these parties are known, showcase a wide variety of electronic artists. On July 31, Warp brings the action Stateside with a varied roster of performers including **Luke Vibert,** who, under names such as Plug and Wagon Christ, makes wildly divergent but intelligent and appealing electronica, and **Prefuse 73,** who manipulates and layers hip-hop beats.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—July 31: The seventeen-year-old singer **Avril Lavigne** is the latest contender to outdo Pink in the race to convince teen-agers that they're hearing something more than stale MTV fluff. It may be too early to tell if she's anything more than a conventional industry creation, but her clever skateboarding-gear outfits and her versatile voice seem to be working—her début album, "Let Go," is in single-digit territory after only a few weeks on the chart.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Aug. 2: The Crescent City revisionists in the **Dirty Dozen Brass Band.** Aug. 4: The popular Cuban ensemble **Sintesis** celebrates twenty-five years of mixing native rhythms with psychedelic rock and roll. Aug. 5-6: The sharp-dressing, silver-haired musical ambassador **Nick Lowe** has presided over an impressive number of facets of pop music in the last thirty years as a performer and a producer. He's enjoying a critical and commercial renaissance, thanks to a trilogy of albums begun in 1994. On his latest, "The Convincer," Lowe favors a well-paced, confidently smooth delivery, underpinned by the same thumping soul rhythm that laced the Elvis Costello albums Lowe produced.



THOMAS EAKINS

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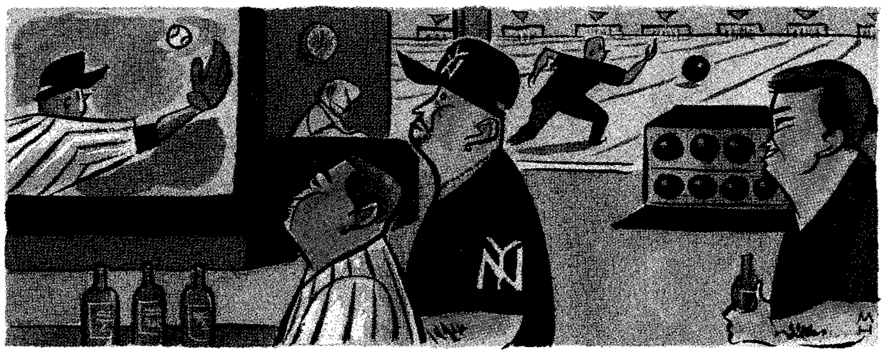
Thomas Eakins, *John Biglin in a Single Scull* (detail), 1873-74, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

EXCURSIONS

Power Alleys



As it turns out, baseball and bowling get along famously. The International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame in St. Louis is located right across from Busch Stadium. The basement of Fenway Park houses an alley for candlepin bowling. Duckpin bowling was invented in Baltimore at an alley owned by two Orioles. And in the Bronx, on River Avenue by the bleacher entrance to Yankee Stadium, the two sports meet up yet again at **BALL PARK LANES** (810 River Ave.; 718-665-5800).

One Friday night, twenty minutes before the first game of a subway series (earlier in the season, the Yankees had visited Shea Stadium), the bowling takes a back seat to noisy drinking. The crowd from the street, waiting to enter the stadium, spills into the alley bar, and then spills into a large, wood-panelled front room, where beer is sold from wheeled carts. At the food counter, a young girl wearing a belly shirt and a rhinestone stud in her navel sells hot dogs and onion rings, rolls her eyes at the pregame rigmarole, and discounts candy bars and soda for the few genuine bowlers.

Around the fourth inning, the last of the ticket holders cross the street, and the remaining crowd settles in. In fact, there are two distinct crowds. Men sit on their stools talking back to the television as nearly life-size sepia pictures of Babe Ruth and Joe DiMaggio stare out from behind the bar. At the lanes, groups of kids and families bowl in well-worn shoes. Behind the bowling counter hangs a signed portrait of George Branham III, the first African-American to win a Professional Bowlers Association national title. A printed sign warns belligerent Yankee fans, "If you / came in here / to bitch / you've just / wasted 98% / of your time. / I suggest / you use / the other / 2% / to find / the door." Both the ball fans and the bowlers generate their fair share of outbursts, though for different reasons. The Yankee fans cheer home runs and Met errors. The bowlers cheer each other. When a young neighborhood girl with a gold scripted name necklace and long painted nails rolls a slow unlikely strike, the crowd erupts as if a Yankee hitter has just sent a high fastball sailing into the stands.

Leroy, the owner of the pro shop, stands in his cramped room, where pristine balls and shoes are shelved to the ceiling, watching the game. He is the axis of the establishment, but also a dissenting voice. "I'm a Mets fan," he says. "A lot of the guys here are." In fact, Leroy has never set foot across the street. "I had the chance to go to a Yankees game a few times," he says. "Front-row seats. I said no." Although bowling is Leroy's passion, he has never rolled a perfect game at Ball Park Lanes. He says very few people could: "The old wood makes it hard. This is an old-school lane. No flashy stuff."

Near the end of the seventh inning, drunken fans repopulate the bar. Three men with "Mets Suck" shirts tell tall tales about the fifteen ushers it took to throw them out of the stadium. A woman orders a gin and tonic and complains of the obnoxious crowd she just escaped. "They're like animals. I should have stayed here." The Yankees are up five runs and will go on to win the game by six. "Does this place stay open after the game?" She sounds concerned, squeezing her lime. The Irish bartender cops an attitude. "We're open till three, yeah. This is a bowling alley, you know."

—*Matt Dellinger*

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—July 31: The **Cato Salsa Experience**, a garage band from Norway with just enough native pop sensibility to keep it from imploding.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—July 31: **Denali** is a new band from Richmond, Virginia, belonging to Maura Davis, a classically trained singer, and her brother Keely, a seasoned rock guitarist from the band Engine Down. The group recently parlayed a five-song demo and a series of extraordinary live performances into a self-titled début album recorded with the help of Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous and Alan Weatherhead. The sound is gloriously melancholy, with Maura's arresting vocals often swelling into a glacial crescendo while her bandmates build a wall of sound around her.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Aug. 2: **Catherine Jauniaux**, one of the world's great avant-garde vocalists, flies in from her home in the South of France for a rare appearance. Jauniaux, the wife of cellist Tom Cora, who died tragically young, in 1998, lived in New York for many years, working with Ikue Mori, Fred Frith, John Zorn, and other downtown luminaries. Her music is almost entirely improvised, and it has a fierce emotional intensity, whether it's an aching melody or an angry, staccato outburst. She has that rare ability to play both the crowd, taking the specific energy from the roomful of people present, and her life, which has had its share of anguish. Joining her is the sensitive and impassioned guitarist **Marc Ribot.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—July 31-Aug. 3: The **Tom Harrell** quintet. The trumpeter has established the kind of intimate responsiveness with the saxophonist **Jimmy Greene** that Harrell himself once had with Joe Lovano. Harrell also flaunts a distinctively dark-veined horn style and a compelling book of originals, as heard on his latest release, "Live at the Village Vanguard." Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—July 31-Aug. 4: **Philip Bailey**, the sumptuous falsetto voice of Earth, Wind & Fire, has lately been performing jazz standards.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Aug. 4: The **Ravi Coltrane** quintet. By taking on the tenor and soprano saxophones just like his father, John, Ravi Coltrane hasn't made it easy for himself. But he has survived his apprenticeship years with distinction and individuality. He has a winning combination of a full-throated horn sound and a healthy urge to sidestep the mainstream. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Aug. 1-4: The evocative Brazilian guitarist and singer **Vinicius Cantuaria** ushers the bossa nova into the twenty-first century. Dining.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Aug. 3: The veteran singer **Marlena Shaw**, an alumna of the Count Basie band, has made a career out of blurring the lines between jazz, pop, and R. & B.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—Aug. 2-3: The **Masters of the Groove** have the credentials to back up the bravado of their name: Reuben Wilson is an old-school practitioner of the Hammond organ, the legendary Bernard (Pretty) Purdie may have more hit records to his credit than any other session drummer, and the guitarist Grant Green, Jr., has the groove in his genes thanks to his fretman father, Grant Green.

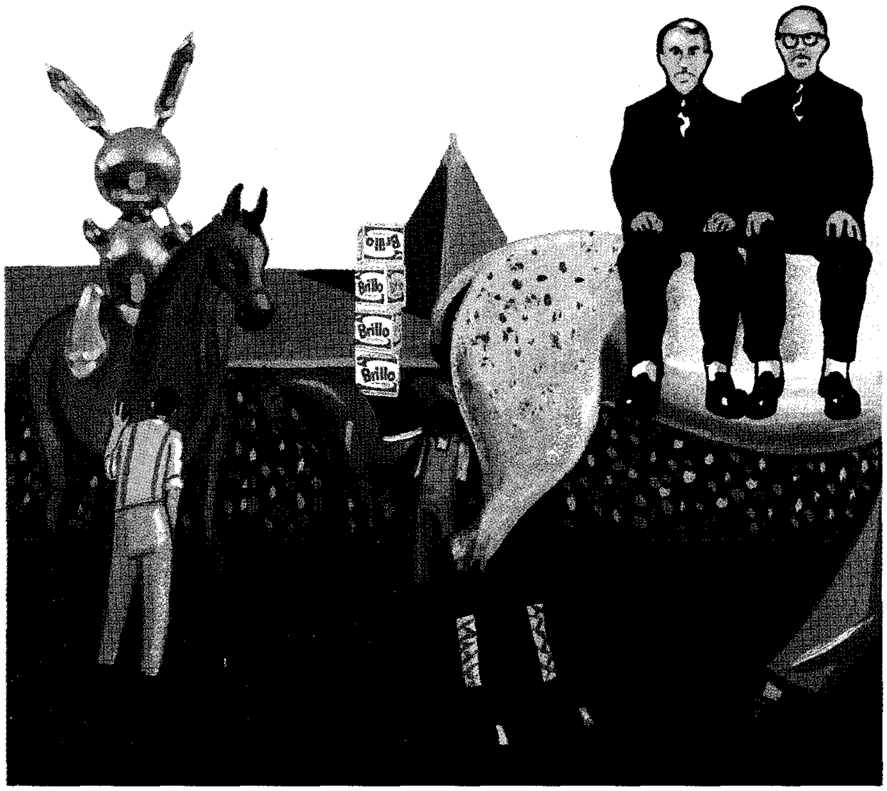
VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Aug. 4: **Bruce Barth,** who first garnered attention in the neo-con finishing school of Terence Blanchard's band, is a sharp young pianist who

MARCELLUS HALL

speaks in a fluent sixties dialect. The blue-chip rhythm team of the bassist **Ugonna Okegwo** and the veteran Miles Davis drummer **Al Foster** spices up Barth's trio. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Gauguin in New York Collections: The Lure of the Exotic"** crowds the downstairs of the Robert Lehman wing with a few familiar masterpieces—the Met's "Ia Orana Maria (Hail Mary)," the Albright-Knox's "Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching)"—and many lesser paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, documents, and oddities (portrait ceramic vessels, a carved walking stick representing a serpent and a wooden shoe). Saluting the Empire State's ravenous hunger for Gauguin, the unchoosy mélange affords a pungent sense of the artist's uneven, seductive mojo. Through Oct. 20. ♦ A magnificent retrospective of the works of Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), perhaps the greatest American artist before Abstract Expressionism, endorses the opinion of the artist's older friend and hero Walt Whitman: "Eakins is not a painter, he is a force." Cannily intermingled paintings, photographs, drawings, sculptures, and miscellaneous artifacts—such as grisly casts taken from parts of dissected cadavers—reveal the artist as a yeoman genius, strenuous in all things. Eakins made aesthetics sweat. It is astonishing how contemporary he feels today. Through Sept. 15. ♦ **"Adrian: American Glamour,"** an exhibition of the designs of Gilbert Adrian (1903-1959), at the Costume Institute. Through Aug. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



The Sonnabend collection of twentieth-century art makes a rare appearance, at the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College, in Saratoga Springs.

ALISON SEIFFER

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City. (708-9480)—The museum's new home, until 2005, opens with a slew of shows perfect for the big, blue renovated factory building near the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge, including the ongoing **"To Be Looked At: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection,"** and **"AUTObodies: Speed, Sport, Transport,"** the museum's car collection. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Moving Pictures."** When artists post production credits at the entrance to photography exhibitions (Gregory Crewdsen) or première their latest work at the Ziegfeld (Matthew Barney), it's clear that contemporary art has fallen under the spell of cinema. The Guggenheim tracks the seduction from the late sixties to the present in a rigorous and entertaining show of photography, film, and video from its permanent collection. The show opens whimsically in the lobby, with Nam June Paik's "TV Garden," dozens of monitors of varying sizes peeking out from a jungle of potted plants. It continues up the ramp chronologically, from early conceptual work by Acconci, Mendieta, and Nauman to a mini-multiplex: five small theatres screening works by young artists from Pierre Huyghe to Shirin Neshat. Through Jan. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Joan Mitchell, the long-underrated second-generation Abstract Expressionist who died in 1992 at her home near Monet's Giverny, spoke paint. A sumptuous retrospective confirms her as a major artist. Mitchell's varieties of abstract landscape conjure nature (including the difficult human kind, in ornery and exacerbated moods) out of pigmented stuff with authoritative abandon. Lessons of Pollock, de Kooning, and, yes, Monet are apparent but thoroughly subsumed. As with great Monets, you sometimes can't tell what you are looking at. It's paint, sure, but as a medium of metaphysical mystery. Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Visions from America: Photographs from the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1940-2001."** Through Sept. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT PHILIP MORRIS
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—A pair of exhibitions treat the concrete corporate atrium as Toyland. Paul Henry Ramirez turns the white-cube side gallery into a walk-in painting. Bubbles and arabesques of hot pink and maroon swoop across the walls; parti-colored polka dots sprout fine, dark lines like oddly realistic hair, as if Dr. Seuss had grown up on Jugendstil design. Meanwhile, in the atrium, Teresita Fernandez hangs a canopy of translucent plastic poles, tinted blue and white, across the Forty-second Street entrance, a suspended river or solidified air current one must duck under. Stephen Hendee also favors translucent plastic—milky, corrugated sheets of it that form a sprawling crystal, lit from within in jewel tones that intensify as day dies down outside. Ester Partegàs is the odd woman out with an Oldenburg-like Chinese take-out bag that reaches nearly to the ceiling, complete with throw-rug-size receipt and eight-foot chopsticks. Through Oct. 11. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

MORGAN LIBRARY
29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—**"Honor, Glory, Adventure: Books for Boys in the Age of Pierpont Morgan"** offers a selection of ingeniously made, innocently grand entertainments for young gentlemen. Lodestars of children's literature appear in first editions: the tales of Hans Christian Andersen, "The Wizard of Oz," "Black Beauty" (curiously subtitled "The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse"). More captivating, though, are the various pre-cinematic viewing contraptions: the French Phenakistiscope and Polyorama Panoptique, the German Kinematefor, and assorted anamorphic images on cards, displayed with mirrored cylinders in which to view the distortions restored to proper shape. Through Sept. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5; Fridays, 10:30 to 8; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Mexico City: An Exhibition About the Exchange Rates of Bodies and Values"** is the arch title of a visceral, important show. Videos, photography, and installations by nineteen Mexicans and resident foreigners peg Mexico City as the Weimar Berlin of our days, where urban adventurers confront epic social chaos with ultra-dark irony and cosmopolitan élan. There's some rough stuff here: a room filled with a fog of water that was used to wash corpses in a morgue (it smells musty) and videotapes made by two sociopath artists of themselves stealing car stereos. Other works rankle more subtly, such as a portable version of Barnett Newman's "Broken Obelisk" made from the pink plastic tarpaulin typically used by Mexican street vendors, by Eduardo Abaroa. The show's mordant wit echoes the rapturous fatalism of the recent terrific Mexican movies "Amores Perros" and "Y Tu Mamá También." Something rich and strange is afoot in Mexico City. Through Sept. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

NIC HESS AND JULIE MEHRETU / KORI NEWKIRK / WILLIAM POPE.L
In a show focussed on wall drawings, the team of Nic Hess and Julie Mehretu score with a splashy, jagged extravaganza, spread across three sides of the room and slamming together graceful scribbles of dark ink, bright stripes of colored tape, a cresting Hokusai wave, and the iconic Air Jordan silhouette. Kori Newkirk plays white-on-white for its value as a pun, wiping a glistening, faintly bluish mix of hair pomade and salt across a blank plaster expanse. William Pope.L disdains such elusive maneuvers for the frankly scatological—a fragment of nastily suggestive text about domestic violence, and a trophy display of plush stuffed animals daubed to the wall with gobs of peanut butter. Through Aug. 18. (The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 662-8610.)

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

DALZIEL + SCULLION / MARK DION / DAN GRAHAM
Two of these three *folies* seem designed for irony: Dalziel + Scullion puts solid aluminum tents in a park where people regularly bed down for the night, and Mark Dion presents a camouflaged "Urban Wildlife Observation Unit" in the limited ecosystem between Broadway and Madison. Only the two rooms of Dan Graham's glass slice-of-pie playhouse, "Bisected Triangle, Interior Curve," seem to fit in their surroundings, both in the material, smoked glass, and in the purpose, an homage to the Flatiron Building and the art of people-watching. Through Oct. 31. (Public Art Fund and Target Art in the Park, Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. 229-7607.)

"SOMETHING, ANYTHING?"
An enjoyable, very hip group show curated by the artist Nayland Blake that features raucous oddments in many mediums by dozens of contemporaries and a few honored dead. Some of the works are the kind of thing that artists make as jokes, for each other and for themselves; others evince the cracked sincerity of outsiders or the professional zaniness of comic-strip cartoonists (Ernie Bushmiller, George Herriman, Kaz). Serious works with wacky aspects (by Philip Guston, Ken Price, Cindy Sherman, and others) are dragooned into Blake's laughing academy to happily disorienting effect. The late Ray Johnson, the passive-aggressive "mail artist," seems to be the show's spectral guru, and Mike Kelley comes as no surprise. Reason? Taste? Never heard of them. But the installation, centered on a huge display console, emits fine visual smarts. In a back room, for the show's duration, a live d.j. spins vinyl from Blake's collection of more than three thousand LPs: that's a piece, too, titled "Ruins of a Sensibility, 1972-2002." Through Aug. 16. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

Short List

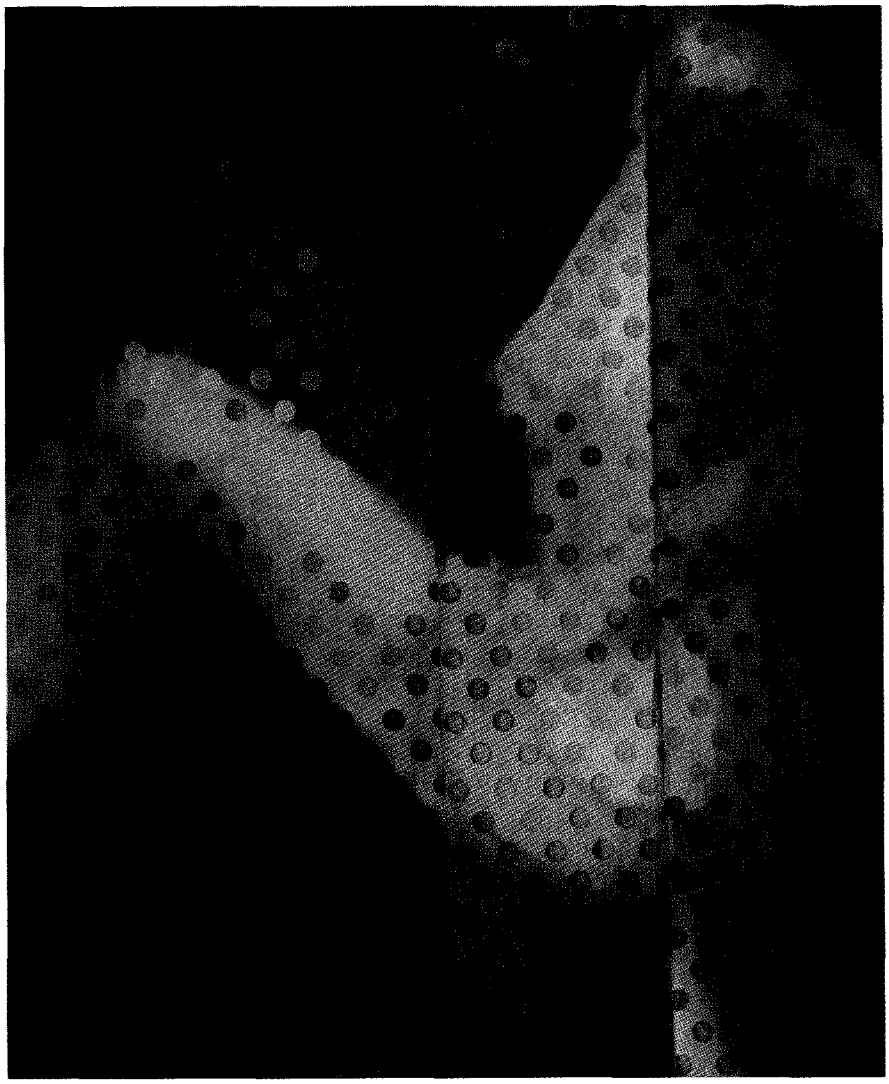
SIOBHAN LIDDELL
CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 229-2766. Through Aug. 9.

JOAN MITCHELL
Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 242-7727. Through Aug. 18.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

SEBASTIAN BLANCK
Blanck's New York début looks perfectly natural in a Miyake showroom: the set of nudes behind transparent polka-dotted shower curtains has the same peekaboo appeal as the designer's slinky outfits. The work's distinctive abstract overlay coyly obscures the nude forms, but it's easy to see who's scrubbing where. In one image, the perspective has cleverly shifted so that the artist looks out from inside the shower into a changing room—which perhaps explains the setting of the show, in the midst of crinkly Miyake silks. Through Aug. 31. (119 Hudson St. 226-0100.)

EDUARDO ABAROA / JEDEDIAH CAESAR / ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS
Drinking straws, dry beans, bottle caps, Hostess cupcakes: there's nothing that Eduardo Abaroa, Abraham Cruzvillegas, and Jedediah Caesar won't throw into their sculptures. More substantial materials do appear: Cruzvillegas studs a block of concrete with brightly colored feathers, and Caesar contributes a large, freestanding curlicue of aluminum that looks as light as a pencil shaving when placed beside Abaroa's performance video, in which he handles cornflakes as if they were rose petals. Through Aug. 2. (Tilton/Kustera, 49 Greene St. 941-1775.)


"Master Bathroom V," by Sebastian Blanck, at the Issey Miyake showroom.

Short List

YOSHITAKA AMANO
Koenig, 249 Centre St. 334-9255. Through Aug. 3.

GALLERIES–OUT OF TOWN

"FROM POP TO NOW"
The gallerist Ileana Sonnabend has made a living out of picking artists for her gallery shows and watching the reputations of her choices grow; she's the art world's version of Warren Buffet. Naturally, the private collection of such a tastemaker could serve as a Cliff's Notes to twentieth-century art. But she and her late husband, Michael, had never shared their stash on these shores. The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College is the lucky benefactor of her change of heart. Eighty works, key pieces by a slew of heavyweights (Artschwager, the Bechers, Dine, Flavin, Gilbert & George, Johns, Judd, Koons, Lichtenstein, Wegman), are up at the spa for the summer. Through Sept. 29. (815 N. Broadway, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 518-580-8080.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

SEBASTIÃO SALGADO
Salgado's interest in hardship (and attendant hope) around the world, and his fondness for children as subjects, brought him to this project—documenting the campaign to eradicate polio in Africa and South Asia. The show's most surprising and urgent images show the transportation of the vaccine, which must move quickly and stay cold in order to remain effective; local health workers carry coolers by motorcycle, by canoe, and, in one case, by motorcycle in a canoe. Their efforts are sponsored in part by UNICEF, for which Salgado is a special representative; his admiring view of the proceedings nimbly treads the line between documenting and proselytizing. Through Aug. 16. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555.)

ERNEST WITHERS
There's plenty of Memphis blues on display here, including a fifties-era B. B. King in Bermuda shorts playing the Hippodrome on Beale Street and Howlin' Wolf and his band laughing in an Arkansas cotton field. By the early nineteen-sixties, Withers had turned his attention toward the civil-rights movement, and he documented the sanitation workers' strike that culminated in the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. A long, straight shot of the funeral march down Auburn Street, where King's body travelled in a horse-drawn hearse engulfed by a wary, shell-shocked crowd, possesses understated yet overwhelming pathos. Withers also has a commercial studio on Beale Street, and at eighty years old he has finally begun to attract the wide notice he deserves. Through Aug. 16. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

"ABOUT FACE"
This show begins with August Sander, the granddaddy of all portrait photographers, then jets to the present day to trace the impact of the naturalistic photo-portrait, which Sander pioneered ninety years ago. His mostly self-conscious outdoor shots of subjects directly facing the camera are quietly disarming through the frankness they achieve. Established artists like Diane Arbus and Thomas Ruff mix with such lesser-knowns as Jitka Hanzlova, who photographs pre-adolescent girls in the Czech Republic, and Chan Chao, whose images of guerrillas in Myanmar were a hit

at the last Whitney Biennial. In the Project Gallery, Yousuf Karsh's black-and-white studio portraits of twentieth-century heavies like Ernest Hemingway and Pablo Picasso are so well lit that the subjects seem to glow from within. Both shows through Aug. 23. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

Short List

"THE BICYCLE"
DeLellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through Aug. 16.
"WHERE IS ELVIS?"
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.
Through Aug. 16.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

NEW YORK GRAND OPERA
Vincent La Selva brings his company back to Central Park's SummerStage, conducting **"Tosca,"** the second opera in this summer's Puccini trilogy. Lisa Daltirus, Dallas Bono, and Michael Corvino take the leading roles; Roberto Stivanello directs. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 31 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
Aug. 1 at 8 and Aug. 3 at 1:30: Robin Guarino's production of **"Pagliacci"** and **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** reverses the usual order of the two verismo masterpieces, and attempts, somewhat shakily, to integrate them by turning the first opera's Tonio into a Pirandellian overseer. The cast of "Pagliacci," which features Marie Plette, John Mac Master, and Ned Barth, is adequate; the leading singers in "Cavalleria," Eugenie Grunewald, Keith Ikaia-Purdy, and Brian Montgomery, are exceptional. The conductor is Stewart Robertson. ♦ Aug. 2 at 8 and Aug. 5 at 2: Haydn's **"Orlando Paladino,"** with Lisa Saffer, Brenda Patterson, Paul Austin Kelly, and Troy Cook; Guido Johannes Rumstadt conducts. In English. ♦ Aug. 3 at 8 and Aug. 6 at 2: At first glance, Mark Adamo's **"Little Women"** seems like yet another unadventurous American opera based on a famous novel, movie, or play. But Adamo's affecting adaptation of the Louisa May Alcott classic (for which he wrote his own libretto) is a spirited work, whose sometimes predictable stylistic moves disappear into an effortless narrative flow. The Glimmerglass production has potent charm, with Rhoda Levine directing in a simple, austere style and Jennifer Dudley, Sandra Piques Eddy, and Joshua Hopkins showing strong young voices in the leads; John DeMain. ♦ Aug. 4 at 2: Tazewell Thompson's new production of Poulenc's **"Dialogues of the Carmelites,"** with Maria Kanyova, Joyce Castle, Robynne Redmon, Sarah Coburn, Anne Evans, and Jason Collins; Robertson. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

BERKSHIRE OPERA COMPANY
Joel Revzen conducts Britten's **"The Turn of the Screw,"** with an impressive young cast that includes Jennifer Alymer, Elizabeth Shammash, Mary Ann McCormick, and Carl Halvorson. Ron Daniels is the director. (Mahaiwe Theatre, 14 Castle St., Great Barrington, Mass. 413-644-9988. Aug. 1 and Aug. 3 at 8 and Aug. 5 at 2. Through Aug. 9.)

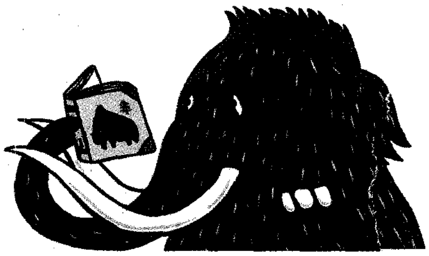
CONCERTS IN TOWN

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS IN THE PARKS
Alisa Weilerstein, an electrifying young American cellist of distinguished pedigree (her father, Donald, was the longtime first violinist of the Cleveland Quartet), completes her round of début concerts with the orchestra. She plays Saint-Saëns's Cello Concerto No. 1 on a program that also includes music by Rossini and Rachmaninoff (the "Symphonic Dances"). Asher Fisch conducts.

AYA KAKEDA

BOOK CURRENTS
Mammoth Undertakings

In 413 A.D., Saint Augustine wrote of the discovery of an enormous tooth on the Mediterranean shore: "If it were cut down into teeth such as we have, a hundred, I fancy, could have been made out of it." He went on: "For though the bodies of ordinary men were larger than ours, the giants surpassed all in stature." Fossil relics, Claudine Cohen points out in **THE FATE OF THE MAMMOTH** (Chicago), newly translated from the French by William Rodarmor, were not infrequently taken as evidence of a prehistoric, super-tall human race. Elephant bones in particular spurred the imagination—the hollowed nasal cavity in the skull of the now-extinct dwarf elephant was thought to be the eye socket of a Cyclops; the mammoth's ivory tusk, the spiralled horn of a unicorn. The myths persisted for centuries; when Lewis and Clark headed west, Thomas Jefferson expressed the hope that they would find a living woolly mammoth larger than those frozen in Europe, thus silencing the French naturalist Buffon, who wrote, "There is something in the New World that is contrary to Nature's growth."



In **TIME TRAVELER** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), Michael Novacek, the curator of paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History, describes his own experience in hunting fossils as a sort of paleo-hazing of the new kids on the dig. Novacek points out the disdain of younger paleontologists for tracking big-game skeletons, and he offers illustrations of selected ancient creatures such as the feathered dinosaur *Archaeopteryx* and *Smilodon californicus*, the sabre-toothed tiger, slinking past the tar pits of Southern California. Novacek's adventures brought him close to his subjects: "I was lost in the rocks and lost in time."

—*Lauren Porcaro*

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(Prospect Park, Brooklyn. July 31. ♦ Great Lawn, Central Park. Aug. 1. ♦ Westchester Community College, Valhalla, N.Y. Aug. 3.) (All performances begin at 8 and conclude with a fireworks show. No tickets necessary. For directions and more information, call 875-5709.)

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

With its music director, Gerard Schwarz, having left to lead the Liverpool Philharmonic, and with no replacement yet in sight, the festival offers a smattering of special events and visiting guest stars. Aug. 2-3 at 8: Yefim Bronfman and Richard Stolzman are the respective soloists in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 ("Emperor") and Weber's Clarinet Concerto in F Minor. Hans Graf, the conductor, begins the concert with Mozart's Symphony No. 39. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 4 at 5: The Austrian baritone Wolfgang Holzmair makes his festival début with a recital of Schubert, Mozart, and Mahler (excerpts from "Des Knaben Wunderhorn"), with Imogen Cooper at the piano. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Aug. 5 at 8: Holzmair returns to sing Schoenberg's chamber version of Mahler's "Songs of a Wayfarer" with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (making its festival début), while Cooper gets a place in the sun performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 18 in B-Flat Major. They're led by the S.C.O.'s principal conductor, Joseph Swensen, known for his almost hyperactive energy on the podium; Schubert's jaunty, Rossinian Third Symphony, which concludes the concert, might just achieve liftoff. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 6-7 at 8: Christian Zacharias, like many a pianist turned conductor, leads a program based in music he already knows. After playing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-Flat Major, he'll perform Schubert's "German Dances" in their piano versions, then conduct them in Webern's gemütlich orchestrations. Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G Minor concludes the program. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

Alisa Weilerstein plays three concerts with the Philharmonic, beginning on July 31.

GILLIAN LAUB

MUSIC AT THE FRICK COLLECTION: LEIPZIG STRING QUARTET

Since these musicians spend part of their careers as members of the Ensemble Avant-Garde of Leipzig, it's not surprising (though very welcome) that they've programmed Lutoslawski's String Quartet to follow Mendelssohn's Quartet in F Minor, one of the mild-mannered composer's most tempestuous works. Beethoven's cheery but complex final Quartet, in F Major, Op. 135, finishes the concert. (1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Aug. 6 at 5:45.)

CONCERTS OUT OF TOWN

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Now that the Festival of the Hamptons has closed up shop for the season, Bridgehampton comes along to pick up the slack. Their first concert features the flutist Marya Martin, the violinist Ida Kavafian, and other renowned artists in music by Diamond, Ravel, Chausson (the Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet), and the sisters Boulanger. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. 631-537-6368. July 31 at 8. Through Aug. 18.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

Charles Dutoit may have thrown in the towel at the Montreal Symphony, but he maintains his connections with the Fabulous Philadelphians, serving once more as artistic director and principal conductor of the orchestra's annual residency at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center—two and a half weeks of standard repertory, splendidly played. July 31: Yo-Yo Ma graces the opening concert, performing the Dvořák Cello Concerto on a program that also includes Berlioz's "Roman Carnival" Overture and the 1911 version of Stravinsky's "Petrushka." ♦ Aug. 1: Music by Strauss and Brahms (the Violin Concerto, with Sarah Chang). ♦ Aug. 2: Kathleen Battle joins the orchestra for arias by Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini. Dutoit concludes the evening with Respighi's "Pines of Rome." ♦ Aug. 3: Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune," Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique," and one curiosity, the Piano Concerto No. 5 ("Egyptian") by Saint-Saëns (with Jean-Yves Thibaudet). (Saratoga, N.Y. All concerts begin at 8:15. 518-587-3330.)

TANGLEWOOD

Aug. 1 at 8:30: The pianist Richard Goode plays four Debussy preludes along with sonatas by Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven (No. 26, "Les Adieux"). ♦ Aug. 2 at 8:30: Emmanuel Krivine conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in music by Dukas, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Ravel (the Piano Concerto in G Major, with Jean-Yves Thibaudet). ♦ Aug. 3 at 8:30: With Seiji Ozawa having departed from the scene, John Williams's presence grows ever larger. Celebrating his seventieth birthday, he conducts the Boston Pops Orchestra in a night of his splendrous film music, some of which will be coördinated with clips from the movies themselves. ♦ Aug. 4 at 2:30: Another program of Williams conducting Williams, leading the B.S.O. in several of his concert works (including the Cello Concerto, with Yo-Yo Ma). ♦ Aug. 6 at 8:30: The superb Boston Symphony Chamber Players come to Ozawa Hall with a program of Mozart (the Quartet for Oboe and Strings, K. 370), Dutilleux, Brahms, and John Harbison ("Words from Paterson," a poignant William Carlos Williams cycle, with the baritone William Sharp). (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL

Aug. 2 at 8: Misha Dichter, always an elegant and collegial chamber musician, performs piano quartets by Mozart, Schumann, and Brahms (the No. 1, in G Minor) with the violinist Chee Yun, the violist Lawrence Dutton, and the cellist Carter Brey. ♦ Aug. 3 at 2: The first of the Caramoor Jazz Festival's two concerts, featuring the James Carter and Marian McPartland trios and the Phil Woods quintet. 10:30 P.M. is the official closing time. ♦ Aug. 4 at 4: Dennis Keene conducts his own chorus and orchestra in Mendelssohn's oratorio "Elijah." (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

SOUTH SHORE MUSIC: CUARTETO CASALS

These Spanish musicians seem well poised to join the chamber-music mainstream: first-prize winners at the 2000 London International String Quartet Competition, they bring a conservative program of Brahms (the Quartet in C Minor), Shostakovich, and Arriaga (the early-nineteenth century "Spanish Mozart") to Saugatuck Congregational Church. (245 Post Rd. E., Westport, Conn. 866-776-8745. Aug. 2 at 8.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Aug. 2 at 8: A centennial Richard Rodgers concert, with the baritone Richard Lalli, the pianist Gary Chapman, and the Flipside Jazz Quintet. ♦ Aug. 3 at 8: Returning to classical fare, the clarinettist and klezmer maven David Krakauer joins the pianist John O'Conor and the Tokyo String Quartet for an evening of Schubert, Beethoven, and Brahms (the Clarinet Quintet). (Routes 44 and 272, Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

The Cuarteto Latinoamericano, which has honorably devoted its twenty years to the performance of music from all of the Americas, settles in for the weekend. Aug. 3 at 8: The four string quartets of Silvestre Revueltas, whose splashy, hard-driving orchestral works defined Mexican music in the nineteen-thirties. ♦ Aug. 4 at 3: Music by composers from all over Central and South America, including Roberto Sierra ("Twelve Bagatelas"), Ana Lara, and Gustavo Becerra-Schmidt. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

MARLBORO FESTIVAL

The venerable chamber-music collaborative continues its weekend concerts. Programs are announced on the festival's Web site, www.marlboromusic.org. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. Aug. 3 at 8:30 and Aug. 4 at 2:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

July 31 at 8: Elizabeth Maguire reads from her novel, "Thinner, Blonder, Whiter." (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave., between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Aug. 4 at 7: Rebecca Donner and Emily Chenoweth, the former and present directors, respectively, of the reading series at K.G.B., read from their new work. (85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Aug. 5 at 7: John Colapinto, the author of "As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl," offers passages from his fiction début, "About the Author: A Novel." (Half King, 505 W. 23rd St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS

July 31 at 7: Reeva Simon and Jean-Marc Oppenheim, of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, join their colleague Naomi Weinberger, who is with the university's U.N. Studies Program, for a discussion about the history of contemporary Israel. (Makor, 35 W. 67th St. 601-1000.) ♦ Aug. 1 at 6:30: Dan Cameron, a senior curator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, talks about the life and work of Hélio Oiticica, a Brazilian artist whose multimedia pieces from the early seventies, when he lived in New York City, are on display at the museum. (583 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. 219-1222.)

MOVIES OPENING

FULL FRONTAL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 2. (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, and Lincoln Square.)

GAZA STRIP
James Longley directed this documentary about the lives of ordinary Palestinians during the months following the election of Ariel Sharon. In Arabic. Opening Aug. 1. (Anthology Film Archives.)

MARTIN LAWRENCE LIVE: RUNTELDAT
A concert film featuring the actor and comedian. Opening Aug. 2.

THE MASTER OF DISGUISE
Dana Carvey wrote this comedy in which he plays a bumbling waiter who comes from a distinguished line of disguise artists. Opening Aug. 2.

MERCI POUR LE CHOCOLAT
Claude Chabrol's forty-eighth film is a psychological mystery involving confused parentage and a suspicious car crash. With Isabelle Huppert, Jacques Dutronc, and Anna Mouglalis. In French. Opening July 31. (Film Forum.)

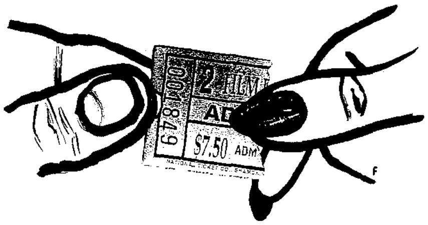
SIGNS
A thriller written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan that begins with a Pennsylvania farmer (Mel Gibson) discovering a crop circle in his back yard. The cast includes Joaquin Phoenix, Rory Culkin, and Abigail Breslin. Opening Aug. 2.

FILM NOTES

THE BOURNE IDENTITY
In this latest iteration of the international thriller, two young people—an amnesiac American who possesses mysterious violent skills (Matt Damon), and a beautiful European vagabond with a taste for adventure (Franka Potente)—race across Europe to escape powerful forces eager to kill them both. Adapted by Tony Gilroy and William Blake Herron from a 1980 novel by Robert Ludlum, the picture has tons of up-to-date surveillance equipment, and it features an unfamiliar Filipino martial art called *kali,* a kind of stuttered karate (block, block, slash, kick). But the movie is still a relic of the bipolar Cold War, and suffers from a fatal lack of purpose. Directed by Doug Liman, who used to make nifty little movies like "Swingers" and "Go."—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/17 & 24/02.) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS
A throwback to those paranoid after-the-A-bomb flicks of the fifties like "Them" and "The Crawling Eye," this silly movie about giant spiders menacing an Arizona town tries to rework familiar material by treating it in an offhand, sardonic way. Nice try. Still, David Arquette, Kari Wuhrer, and the always sublime Scarlett Johansson deal with the musty genre conventions good-naturedly, and the computer-generated arachnids are reasonably entertaining.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE FAST RUNNER (ATANARJUAT)
A three-hour marathon of ice, snow, and raw seal meat. This Inuit epic is quite a trek, but many of the visual sequences—the Arctic in summer and winter—are sublime and unprecedented. A ten-minute episode showing the hero, Atanarjuat, running across a frozen sea has been hailed, justifiably, as a masterstroke, but there are many other discoveries, like sunshine filtering through the cracks of an igloo and the gray-on-gray polar horizon. Directed by the Inuit filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, the movie's straight-arrow tale of murder and revenge carries it through the more tedious "Nanook of the North" moments. But even these digressions—for example, scenes that show the way the Inuit greet each other, carry themselves, and cut their food—stay with you. At the extreme north, the basic motions of life somehow seem startling and fresh. In Inuktitut.—*Michael Agger* (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)



FURY
When this 1936 melodrama about an orgy of mob violence against an innocent man—it was Fritz Lang's first American movie—opened in London, Graham Greene said in his review that it was "the only film I know to which I have wanted to attach the epithet of 'great.'" Though Americans may rate it high, they are unlikely to go that far. Spencer Tracy (as the victim) and Sylvia Sidney are very fine, and the picture has so much vitality that it's easy to make allowances for the tacky ending, which doesn't jibe with Lang's sensibility and style. But the sensibility and style are themselves hurdles. The schematic view of fate, the lighting and design, the stylized movements of the lynchers all relate to the theatrical wing of the German Expressionist movement; Lang brings a heavy battery of advanced stagecraft to the small-town American Southern setting.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Aug. 5-6.)

HIMALAYA
This exotic adventure of unyielding suspense and scruffy splendor is Howard Hawks's "Red River" with yaks, but as a Buddhist John Ford might have made it. Instead of John Wayne's grizzled cattle boss there is Tinle (Thilen Lhondup), an old chief in a remote region of Nepal. Instead of Wayne's surrogate son, Montgomery Clift, there is Karma (Gurgon Kyap), an upstart whom Tinle wrongly suspects killed his older son. When the time comes to load salt on yaks and trade it in distant towns for a winter's worth of food, Karma sets out early with a young group of rebels. Tinle waits for the village elders to announce the most auspicious departure time, then embarks with old comrades, his older son's widow, his grandson, and, most touchingly, his second son, a monk and painter who joins the caravan out of filial devotion. In the Ford tradition, the director, Eric Valli, achieves visual majesty in the fragile diagonals that Tinle and his group etch on the screen as they trek across the Himalayas. And the action doesn't play out with showdowns as in Hawks's epic; just as Ford would have, Valli emphasizes the men's grousing their way into a renewal of tradition. In Tibetan and German.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 3-4.)

THE KID STAYS IN THE PICTURE
Before Robert Evans was discovered at a Hollywood swimming pool by the aging Norma Shearer, he was a garmento from New York with swarthy good looks and the confidence of a lion. Thrust into pictures in his twenties, Evans quickly became the head of production at Paramount, where he played a significant role in generating such classics as "Rosemary's Baby," "The Godfather," and "Chinatown." In the seventies, Evans fell in with the high-rolling hipster élite, including Jack Nicholson and Warren Beatty, and became famous for both his gutsy, stand-by-the-talent decisions and his outsized appetites for beautiful women and cocaine. The movie is a celebratory narrative of Evans's life, composed of newsreel footage, stills, and haunting shots of his mansion in various states of glory and disrepair. Evans himself narrates in his gravelly voice: his speech is a cross between hardboiled rhetoric and the traditional crass-but-with-heart bullying of Hollywood power types. He comes off as a preposterously likable man, though the movie is so one-sided that you never get the truth of any situation that it touches on. The team of Brett Morgen and Nanette Burstein produced and directed, and the magazine editor Graydon Carter acted as a producer.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

KLUTE
Jane Fonda in possibly her finest dramatic performance, as Bree, an intelligent, high-bracket call girl, in Alan J. Pakula's 1971 murder-melodrama. The life surrounding Bree's profession frightens her, but the work itself has peculiar compensations—she enjoys her power over her customers. She's maternal and provocative with them, confident and contemptuously cool. The suspense plot involves the ways in which prostitutes attract the forces that destroy them. Bree's knowledge that as a prostitute she has nowhere to go but down and her mixed-up efforts to escape make her one of the strongest women characters to reach the screen. And Fonda is very exciting to watch: the closest closeup never reveals a false thought.—*P.K.* (Moving Image; Aug. 3.)

K-19: THE WIDOWMAKER
Nobody knows what happened, but somehow the Kathryn Bigelow who directed "The Loveless" and "Point Break"—hip, stylized, and about as solemn as a surfboard—has grown into someone who makes long, worthy films on such topics as what to do when your nuclear reactor springs a leak. This new picture stars Harrison Ford, who seems to have bitten off more of a Russian accent than he can chew, as the captain of a Soviet submarine. He is seconded, not without rivalry, by Liam Neeson; their looming standoff never quite happens, and the same feels true of the whole tale. Cleaving solidly to its factual basis, (the real K-19 was launched in 1961), the film tells thrillingly of a war that didn't break out and a vessel that never sank. The dialogue has a clanging, Cold War rigidity, which may explain why the camera keeps scurrying, as if by way of compensation, through the iron burrows of the sub. No one can deny the cautionary lesson that Bigelow delivers on the perils of radiation, but most people will crave more thrills to go with their nasty spills.—*Anthony Lane* (7/29/02) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, 19th Street East 6, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LOVELY & AMAZING
A comedy about self-dissatisfaction, featuring a mother and three daughters in Los Angeles. Jane Marks (Brenda Blethyn), the mom, undergoes liposuction and flirts with her doctor; Michelle (Catherine Keener), stuck in a loveless marriage, can't sell the little chair sculptures that she makes; Elizabeth (Emily Mortimer), an actress, thinks that she's ugly and encourages her bedmate, a narcissistic actor (Dermot Mulroney), to judge her naked body, limb by limb; Annie (Raven Goodwin), an African-American girl adopted by Jane, worries over her hair. The writer-director Nicole Holofcener has a gentle touch, though she doesn't pull her themes together as much as one would like. The movie is intelligent and funny but a little unfocussed.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, and Empire 25.)

MEN IN BLACK II
Except for a few funny moments, pretty much a bore. The director Barry Sonnenfeld must have believed that the best part of the original was not its hip, mordant wit but the conventionally junky sequence at the end in which Will Smith got smacked around a lot and doused in slime. "MIIB" is mostly dull physical comedy and slapstick special effects, and it seems to have been made for unusually literal-minded children.—*D.D.* (7/8/02) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

METROPOLIS
Fritz Lang's 1927 pop-visionary epic has always been, from sequence to sequence, a milestone of

precision craftsmanship on a gargantuan scale. No director has ever raised so many shivers from choreographing geometric hordes of extras—they move like organic machines or bristling anacondas and leviathans. The inclusion, in the current print, of forty minutes' worth of footage never before seen in America brings some sense to the motivation of Rotwang (Rudolf Klein-Rogge), the unhinged inventor who is creating a mechanical woman. Lost scenes rendered here only with titles also lay out the industrialist Joh Fredersen's search for his rebellious boy, who has become a member of Maria's Christian workers' movement—and her lover. With this subplot, the picture operates as a proto-noir suspense film, as well as a mad-scientist extravaganza and an all-out disaster flick.—*M.S.* (Film Forum.)

MINORITY REPORT

A frantic return to form for Steven Spielberg, whose pulse seems to have quickened after the sluggish musings of "A.I." We are still stuck in the future, but it comes with a twist from the mazelike mind of Philip K. Dick. Tom Cruise plays John Anderton, a bright spark in the shadowy field of Precrime. With a little help from three oracles known as the Pre-Cognitives, he is able to predict, and therefore to prevent, approaching murders. The homicide rate has plunged, although the monitoring official from the Justice Department (Colin Farrell) looks worried about the ethics of the program. Where "A.I." was a wandering quest, this is a straightforward chase, as Anderton finds himself accused and hunted down. Spielberg is able to flex those muscles—his ridiculous powers of suspense—that threw him so hard into the movie business in the first place. Like "Jaws," the new film is none too serious, though it is forever touching on serious things; the world it unveils may look dark, yet the plot accelerates with the lightness of comedy.—*A.L.* (7/1/02) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

MR. DEEDS

It's billed as an homage to the 1936 Capra classic, but the only tradition being watered down is the Adam Sandler movie. He's one of the more gifted wisecrackers around, but most of his routines—the deadpan sincerity, the over-the-top regular guyness, the non-actors he lines up for odd cameos—seem stale and second rate in this, his seventh starring vehicle. It's like listening to a decent pop song you've heard too many times. The chief pleasure is John Turturro, who steals the movie as a "sneaky, sneaky" butler with a foot fetish.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

MY WIFE IS AN ACTRESS

The lovely Charlotte Gainsbourg stars with her husband, Yvan Attal, in this French comedy—a slow burn about the art and illusion of moviemaking. Gainsbourg plays an adored actress, a sexy siren, and Attal plays her husband, a sportswriter who is driven to comically neurotic and jealous heights by her work on the screen. The screwball set-up is played very gracefully—Gainsbourg and Attal are so appealing together that their lines dance around each other rather than provide pratfalls. In French.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE PIANO TEACHER

Michael Haneke's calmly lucid masterpiece is about a seemingly unmanageable subject: a sadomasochistic piano teacher, Professor Erika Kohut (Isabelle Huppert), who maintains a sternly proper façade at the Vienna Conservatory while tormenting and playing dirty tricks on her talented students. Erika tries to control the insolently charming and handsome young piano student (Benoît Magimel) who wants to be her lover. She's a remarkable dramatic creation—an appalling but plausible human being brought to life by one of the world's bravest actresses. This is a genuinely shocking movie (one scene of self-mutilation is hard to take), but it's supremely intelligent, too, and there isn't a trace of sensationalism. In French.—*D.D.* (4/1/02) (Cinema Village and Thalia Theatre.)

READ MY LIPS

A half-deaf but observant secretary (Emmanuelle Devos), who reads people's lips and attitudes and feels like a loser, and a mangy ex-con (Vincent Cassel), with a blank look in his eyes and an endless capacity for trouble, make a very odd couple. But the writer-director Jacques Audiard, working close to his actors with a camera devoted to glances, reactions, and tiny gestures, gets us to believe that these two hard cases are destined for each other. The woman requires some waking up, a little danger or excitement, if she is not to expire from boredom and depression; the man needs some sense talked into him if he is not to be sent straight back to prison. They form an alliance and renew themselves by ripping off unsavory characters. The movie turns into a breathless and rather audacious study in the sexiness of a nonsexual relationship. In French.—*D.D.* (7/15/02) (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

REIGN OF FIRE

Fire-breathing dragons menace postapocalyptic society in the director Rob Bowman's fantasy-adventure romp. The film stars a buff-beyond-belief Matthew McConaughey and the hunky Christian Bale, who participate in some spectacular lizard-slaying stunts. The sets and costumes recall the "Road Warrior" series, and Bowman shamelessly encourages a scenery-chewing hysteria in his leads. Mesmerizing junk.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

ROAD TO PERDITION

A solemnly beautiful art concept—which is not quite the same thing as a great movie. Tom Hanks plays a Depression-era mob assassin, a family man with a small moustache and a stiff walk. The talented English director Sam Mendes ("American Beauty"), along with his collaborators, the cinematographer Conrad L. Hall and the veteran costume designer Albert Wolsky, draw their visual ideas and moods from old movies and comic books, distilling the memory of crime fiction—rather than the memory of crime—into imagery that could not be more iconic. Hanks moves through a stylized world of fedoras, long dark coats, and thick-woven suits; there's also lots of rain coming straight down the way it did in noir movies of the forties and fifties. Visually, the picture is all of a piece, but it's a self-conscious piece of work—all dark-toned academic classicism. With Paul Newman as the head of a crime family in a small Illinois city, Stanley Tucci as Al Capone's right-hand man, and Jude Law, made over into a ferrety grotesque, as a photographer of corpses who kills people on the side.—*D.D.* (7/15/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

STRAY DOG

Toshiro Mifune is magnetic as a Tokyo cop obsessed with recovering his gun after it gets picked from his pocket on a crowded bus, but the real star of Akira Kurosawa's amazing 1949 crime melodrama is the city itself, in all its heat and squalor. The movie is an impassioned outcry against social dissolution—Kurosawa sees both Mifune and the thief who goes on a crime spree with the cop's pilfered Colt as products of a brutal postwar environment. Ko Kimura, as Mifune's nemesis, creates a manic, pathetic character in a matter of minutes. In Japanese.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; Aug. 1-3.)

STUART LITTLE 2

Without sacrificing any of the magical allure of the 1999 original, this sequel chronicles the further adventures of an enterprising mouse (voice by Michael J. Fox) and his adopted human family (played by Geena Davis, Hugh Laurie, and Jonathan Lipnicki). The story here is more in keeping with E. B. White's cheeky children's classic. Stuart's dilemma—being scammed by a pretty bird (Melanie Griffith) and her falcon partner (James Woods) for his family's valuables—lets the movie explore themes of loneliness and trust playfully. The director Rob Minkoff paints an idealized vision of New York City, a land of doormen and afternoon tea. His movie feels like it's spun from sugar.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SUNSHINE STATE

The writer-director John Sayles will never be a natural filmmaker, but this leisurely, ruminative movie about real-estate mischief and transiency in Florida has some of the most witty and large-spirited writing he's ever done for the movies and some of the best acting he's ever coaxed out of his performers. The movie chronicles the attempt of developers to take over a couple of decrepit beach towns north of Jacksonville and the ambiguous response of the locals—some fighting, some selling out. Edie Falco has the best role of her career as Marly, one of those Americans who possess more intelligence than they can use in an unsatisfactory job. Marly looks for men and makes bitter jokes that her listeners don't always understand. Angela Bassett is a failed actress who returns to the black middle-class beach town she left when she became pregnant at fifteen. The good talk swirls around these two, and the talkers include Alan King, Ralph Waite, Jane Alexander, Bill Cobbs, Mary Alice, Timothy Hutton, and Mary Steenburgen. It's a shrugging, life-goes-on movie about a state in which people pull things up by the roots, including themselves, and move forward.—*D.D.* (7/8/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

TADPOLE

A short but annoying film from Gary Winick, who brings us the astonishing news that teen-age boys want to make out with women three times their age. Oscar (Aaron Stanford) is fifteen, half-French, and wholly unappealing; nevertheless, he goes to bed with a chiropractor (Bebe Neuwirth) and hungers after his own stepmother (Sigourney Weaver), who vaguely returns the compliment. Some of the scenes, involving Oscar the hapless patsy rather than Oscar the hopeful swain, are smartly managed; others, like an overcooked sequence at Café Boulud, prove harder to stomach. The movie was shot on digital video, which means that most viewers will reach for their spectacles before realizing that the fuzz is not their fault. Only Bebe Neuwirth fans, a discerning crowd, will have a ball. She has never been so mean or, as a result, so hot to the touch.—*A.L.* (7/29/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

TIME REGAINED

Only a fool, you suppose, would attempt to film Proust; in that case, Raoul Ruiz, the Chilean director, is a wise and delicate fool, especially since he elected to concentrate on the concluding volume of "In Search of Lost Time." There's no Swann, and not much of Proust's beloved Albertine (Chiara Mastroianni), but plenty of Odette (Catherine Deneuve), the Baron de Charlus (John Malkovich), and the haughty Saint-Loup (Pascal Greggory), plus enough of Gilberte (Emmanuelle Béart) to demonstrate why men and boys alike would throw their hearts, or their teacups, at her feet. The picture has a stately, waltz-like rhythm, as the narrator (Marcello Mazzarella, a dead ringer for the real Proust) guides us through the declining fortunes of his friends under the shadow of the First World War. There are the inescapable glances back into Proust's childhood, but this 1999 movie feels more companionable than cloistered. At times, both people and props start to shift and sway, as though on the deck of a ship; if you come out of the movie suffering from a mixture of nausea and nostalgia, then Ruiz can pride himself on a job well done. In French.—*A.L.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 4.)

TOSCA

Watching opera singers do what they do in closeup can become an unwanted invitation to play dentist, but Benoît Jacquot's cinematic adaptation of Puccini's glorious potboiler sidesteps most of the usual grotesqueries by switching from a traditional, highly theatrical staging of the action, full of swooping camera movements, to scenes of the backstage recording process (in black-and-white) to grainy stills of nineteenth-century Rome. As the tempestuous diva Floria Tosca, the Romanian soprano Angela Gheorghiu smolders with a nineteen-forties glamour. The Italian tenor, Roberto Alagna, is relentlessly ardent as her lover, the painter Mario Cavaradossi (if their endless embraces seem remarkably natural, it may be because the two singers are married to each other). Best of all is the Italian baritone Ruggero Raimondi, a veteran of operas-into-films, whose Baron Scarpia threatens to outdo Anthony Hopkins's Hannibal Lecter as a study in pure, pop-eyed evil. Vocally enhanced by a pumped-up soundtrack and accompanied by the Royal Opera House Orchestra, under the high-throttle leadership of Antonio Pappano, they all sound magnificent.—*Charles Michener* (Quad Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

AUSTIN POWERS IN GOLDMEMBER
Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.
HAPPY TIMES
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
I AM TRYING TO BREAK YOUR HEART
Cinema Village.
LAN YU
Quad Cinema.
SEX AND LUCÍA
Sunshine Cinema.
SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR
Quad Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

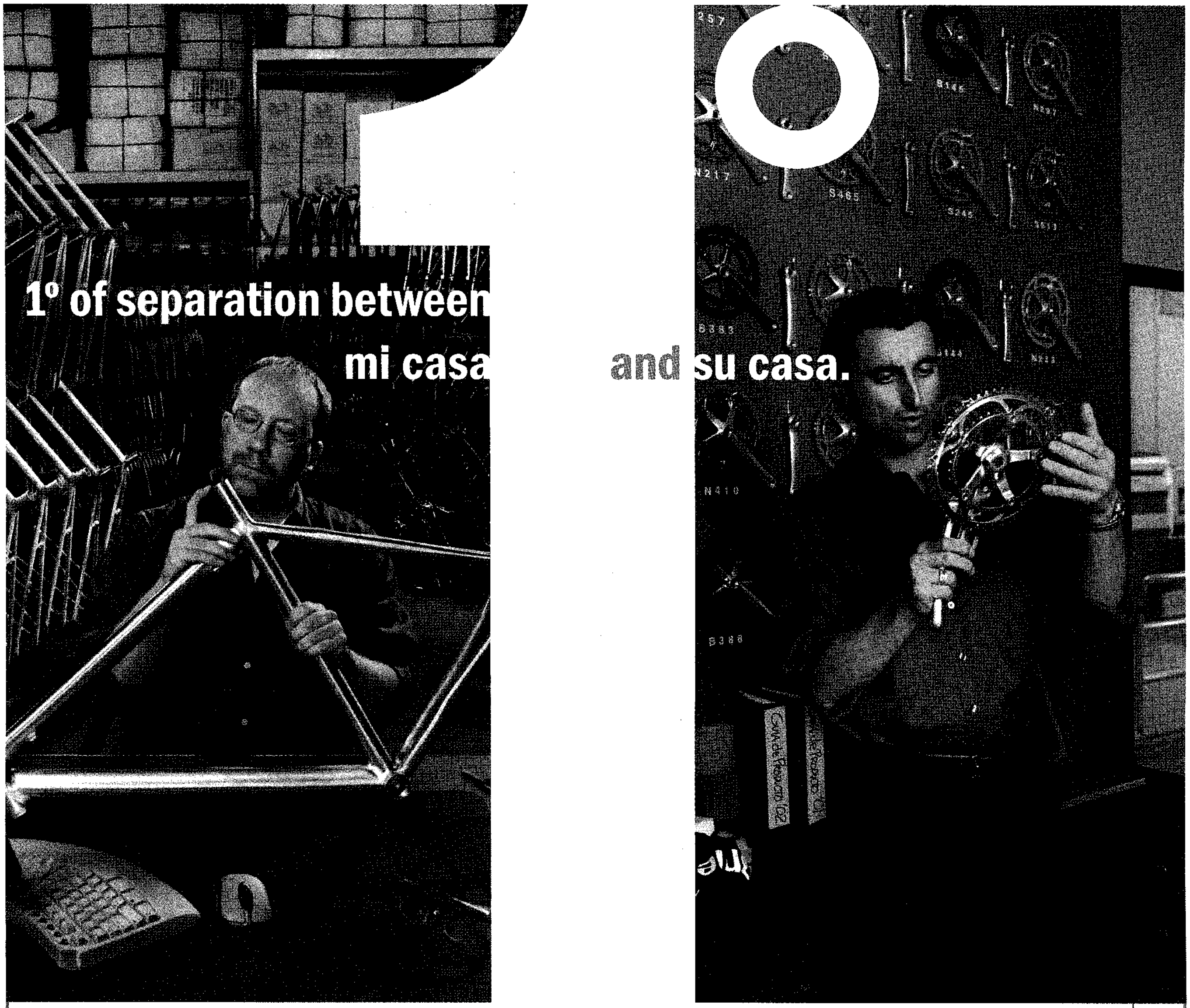
Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 8: "Carnal Knowledge: The Sexual Revolution on Film, 1967-1972." Aug. 3 at 2: "Belle de Jour" (1967, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Aug. 3 at 4: "Klute" (†). ♦ Aug. 4 at 2: "Lonesome Cowboys" (1967, Andy Warhol). ♦ Aug. 4 at 4: "Flesh" (1968, Paul Morrissey). ♦ Repertory nights. Aug. 3-4 at 6:30: "Fahrenheit 451" (1966, François Truffaut).

At Film Forum, Claude Chabrol's "Merci Pour le Chocolat."

JEAN-CLAUDE GOTTING

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—July 31 at 7: "Maldone" (1928, Jean Grémillon; silent). ♦ Aug. 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Black Picket Fence" (2002, Sergio Goes). ♦ The films of Ken Loach. Aug. 2 at 2, 4:30, 6:30, and 9:30: "Poor Cow" (1967). ♦ Aug. 3-4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Kes" (1969). ♦ The American films of Fritz Lang. Aug. 5 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10 and Aug. 6 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Fury" (†).
BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. (512-5700)—Free outdoor movies, starting at dusk. Aug. 5: "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" (1967, Stanley Kramer).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Sept. 12: "Kurosawa & Mifune," a retrospective of the actor-director team. All films are new prints and in Japanese. July 31 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "I Live in Fear" (1955). ♦ Aug. 1-3 at 1, 3:30, 6, and 8:30: "Stray Dog" (†). ♦ Aug. 4-6 at 1:10, 3:10, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Drunken Angel" (1948).
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through Aug. 13: "The Sly Grin: Contemporary French Comedies." Aug. 6 at 12:30 and 6:30: "Ouch" (2000, Sophie Fillières; in French). ♦ Aug. 6 at 3:30 and 9: "The Discreet" (1992, Christian Vincent; in French).
SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
Broadway at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-956-1819)—Free outdoor movies, starting at dusk. July 31: "Eternity and a Day" (1999, Theo Angelopoulos; in Greek).
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Aug. 2-3: "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" (1971, Mel Stuart).
THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Through Sept. 8: "Classic Thalia: A Tribute to Martin and Ursula Lewis." July 31-Aug. 1 at 7 and 9:30 and Aug. 3-4 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Piano Teacher" (†). ♦ Aug. 6 at 6:30: "As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty" (2000, Jonas Mekas).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Aug. 1: "The Return of the American Film Theatre," a selection of plays from the early-seventies television series. July 31 at 5 and Aug. 1 at 8: "A Delicate Balance" (1973, Tony Richardson). ♦ July 31 at 8 and Aug. 1 at 5: "Galileo" (1975, Joseph Losey). ♦ Starting Aug. 2: "Happy Birthday, Kino." Aug. 2 at 4 and 9: "Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography" (1992, Arnold Glassman, Todd McCarthy, and Stuart Samuels). ♦ Aug. 2 at 6 and Aug. 3 at 1: "Tin Drum" (1979, Volker Schlöndorff; in German). ♦ Aug. 3 at 4 and 8:30: "Brightness" (1987, Souleymane Cissé; in Bambara and French). ♦ Aug. 3 at 6:15 and Aug. 4 at 8:45: "Himalaya" (†). ♦ Aug. 4 at 1 and 7: "Dersu Uzala" (1975, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 4 at 3:45: "Time Regained" (†). ♦ Aug. 5 at 4 and 9: "The Cry" (1957, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 5 at 6:30: "The Ballad of Narayama" (1982, Shohei Imamura; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 6 at 4: "A Year of the Quiet Sun" (1984, Krzysztof Zanussi; in English and Polish).



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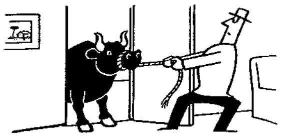
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
HIGH HOPES

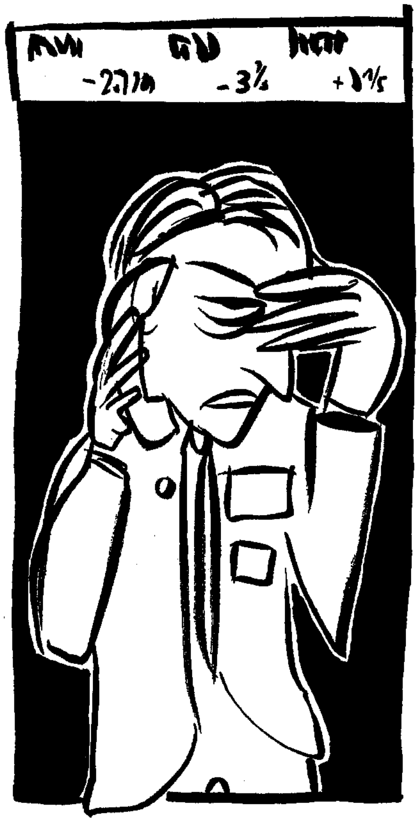


When things are going badly, there is a natural tendency to say that they can't get much worse. As the stock market tumbled in recent weeks, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, President Bush, and many others succumbed to that tendency. Greenspan, while avoiding direct comment on the market's gyrations, assured Congress that a healthy economic recovery was under way. The President, while conceding that "you're talking to the wrong guy about what stocks to buy," told reporters that "the future's going to be bright" and that, eventually, "you'll see the market go back up."

Last Wednesday, two days after President Bush made these remarks, the Dow shot up almost five hundred points and closed well above 8,000. He must have been mightily relieved. Since he entered the Oval Office, the Dow has fallen some twenty-five per cent, the S. & P. 500 has slipped even further, and the Nasdaq has dropped by more than half. As Floyd Norris noted in the *Times*, not even Herbert Hoover, who also predicted bright times ahead, had such a dismal economic start to his Presidency.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Last week's rally—the biggest one-day percentage gain since 1987—was partly the result of what is known on Wall Street as a "short squeeze." In recent months, many professional speculators have been selling stocks they don't own and then buying them back after the prices fell, pocketing the difference. When the market turned up, the "shorts," faced with heavy losses, rushed to buy back the stocks they had sold, and this added to the demand from bargain hunters. The sight of Congress finally taking some meaningful action to reform corporate accounting also helped the rally, as did rumors that the Fed was considering another interest-rate cut.



All the same, it is probably too early to declare an end to the bear market, which began more than two years ago, in April, 2000, with the bursting of the Internet bubble. Since then, it has gradually extended outward, taking down one sector after another with almost clinical precision: dot coms, technology, telecommunications, media, pharmaceuticals, retailers, financials. Even now, stocks are far from cheap—a point that Kenneth Dam, the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, acknowledged in a surprising moment of candor. At last week's lows, stocks in the S. & P. 500 index were selling for about twenty-two times their earnings per share over the past twelve months. Going back to 1870, stocks have traded, on average, at about fourteen times earnings. It's true that some firms' profits are unusually low because of the recent recession, but there is still no indication of a sustained recovery in corporate earnings. Indeed, there is a serious threat of a relapse.

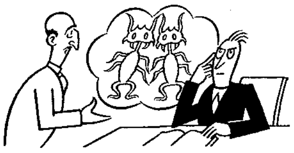
Since the spring of 2000, about seven trillion dollars of stock-market wealth has vanished—about seven hundred thousand dollars for each American household. Rich people have been hit the hardest, but tens of millions of middle-class Americans have also seen their net worth shrivel. As stock prices have fallen, businesses have been slashing investment and laying off workers. But consumers, whose spending accounts for about two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product, have been buying things like automobiles and houses at record rates. In the first quarter of this year, for example, spending on new homes increased at an annual rate of more than fourteen per cent, which helped the economy to grow at an annual rate of more than six per cent. The Greenspan-Bush prognosis depends on consumers continuing to ignore the stock market's fall and keeping their wallets open until businesses start spending again. Perhaps this will happen. In recent weeks, however, shoppers have been showing signs of worry. Measures of consumer confidence have fallen, and so have sales of durable goods, such as furniture and computers. People may finally be accepting that neither the economy nor the stock market is going to revert to its former course anytime soon, and adjusting their spending accordingly. If so, the pessimism could turn out to be self-fulfilling, in which case a "double dip" recession would be quite possible.

After the stock-market crash of October, 1929, a plunge in consumer spending the following year brought on the Great Depression. Economists still aren't sure why this happened. Back then, just one household in fifty owned stocks. The most convincing explanation is that the market's collapse frightened even people who didn't own stocks, and they reacted by cutting back on spending. There is little chance of a repeat of the nineteen-thirties, although the recent repeal of some New Deal banking reforms is hardly reassuring. History demonstrates the crucial role that psychology plays in economic downturns, and it also helps to explain why the Bush Administration and the Fed are so keen on keeping people's spirits up. These days, the proportion of households who own stocks in some form is about one in two.

So far, at least, rising real-estate prices and plentiful supplies of credit have helped to offset losses in the stock market, and there has been little evidence of panic. But housing prices can't go up forever, and credit-card bills eventually have to be paid. Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* reported a new trend: people selling their homes and renting in anticipation of a real-estate crash. At the moment, thankfully, shorting bricks and mortar is a minority pursuit, and most people still consider real estate a safe investment. Of course, most people used to feel the same way about stocks.

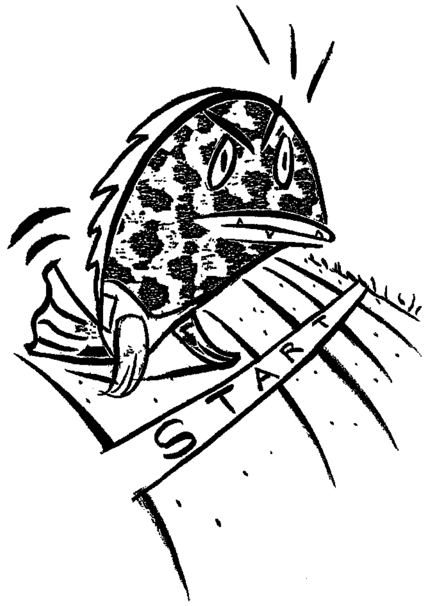
—John Cassidy

AND THEY'RE OFF DEPT.
ONE FAST FISH



To the list of dream matchups devised around campfires and pitchers of beer—Wilt vs. Shaq, Mac vs. Venus, grizzly vs. crocodile—add one more: turtle vs. snakehead. It would be some race, a turtle and a fish. The early line in Chinatown is that the outcome would depend on the surface. "On the carpet, the turtle would win," a fishmonger there said last week. "But in the mud? Definitely the snakehead."

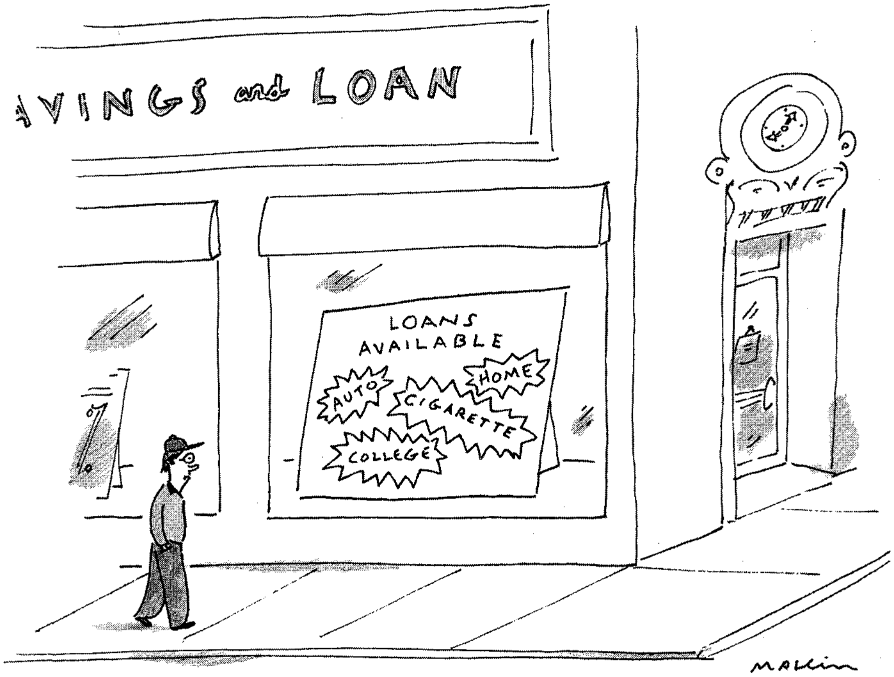
By now, surely, you have heard of the snakehead—the northern snakehead, also known as Frankenfish or the Fish from Hell. It is a hardy and voracious species from China that gobbles up native fish and quickly takes over whatever lake, pond, or river it finds itself in. It can grow to more than three feet in length and has been known to eat rats. (Its cousin the giant snakehead will occasionally form packs and attack people.) The northern snakehead's most impressive characteristic, however, is its ability to traverse dry land. It can "walk," propelling itself with its pectoral fins from one body of water to another, and it can survive out of water for up to three days. "This is the most potentially damaging fish introduction the United States has ever faced," Walter Courtenay, a Florida ichthyologist, said last week.



Snakehead

The day before, the Bush Administration, responding to news of a snakehead invasion of a Maryland pond, had proposed a nationwide ban. After all, the snakehead's main conveyance, pecs notwithstanding, is man. "These things don't have legs, but people do," Courtenay, who is known as Dr. Snakehead, said. In Asia, snakeheads, freshly killed and cooked, are said to have extraordinary healing powers; for this reason, they are transported, while still alive, by boat, plane, truck, and bicycle, to fish markets in Asian neighborhoods on the East Coast, despite the fact that they are illegal in thirteen states (though not in New York). This is how they reached Maryland: a man purchased a pair in Chinatown, smuggled them south, nourished them well, then, alarmed by their burgeoning appetite and size, dumped them into a pond behind a Dunkin' Donuts. Now, to prevent the fish from strolling the seventy-five yards over dry land to a nearby river and from there to habitats far, far away, authorities are considering poisoning the pond.

But how fast, really, is the snakehead? Last week, a team of amateur ichthyologists set out for Chinatown to put a snakehead to the test. The first stop was the Seafood International Corporation, a teeming market on Mott Street. There, in a styrofoam box toward the back, next to a tankful of glistening eels, six northern snakeheads—each about a foot and a half long, dappled like a diamondback, and shaped like a pork loin—were hovering in four inches of water. They looked listless and uncompetitive. Above the box was a recent front page from the *News*, which read "THE FISH FROM HELL." (And it wasn't a slow news day; the reefer at the top of the page was "WORST STOX WEEK SINCE 9/11.") The fishmongers had made a sign to go with the *News* clip: "Eat the fish from hell. Live longer. Most of them are well train, they do not eat and bite now. $4 each." ("$9 lb" had been crossed out.) Above this sign was another—"Hot Item only $10 shot"—the meaning of which became clear when a



camera was produced. Apparently, it costs more to photograph a snakehead than to eat one.

A few blocks east, at Grand Seafood Market, on Grand Street near Forsyth, the snakeheads seemed more robust. They swam around menacingly in a big glass tank, flaring their pectoral fins. A sign on the tank said "$4.99." The fishmonger scooped one up with a net and slipped it into a baggie full of water. Since there were no turtles here, other opponents were considered. The frogs, who peered up longingly from the bottom of a barrel, were in a different league. The snails seemed a little slow. But the blue crabs, clattering in their bucket, looked like fighters. A nimble one was selected and paid for: fifty cents.

The racetrack was in Sara D. Roosevelt Park, between Forsyth and Chrystie Streets, on a patch of mud roughly the size of a beach towel. There was some broken glass and even some grass, but for the most part it seemed the type of terrain a snakehead ought to thrive on: a fast track. With some help from its handlers, the snakehead took up position first, and the crab was set down next to it. A bag of water was dumped over them. "Go," someone said.

It is fair to say that while up to this point none of the amateur ichthyologists had really expected the fish to get up and walk, as Charlie the Tuna might have, some disappointment passed among them as the two creatures lay motionless in the mud, looking disconsolate and very aquatic. A few moments went by. A gentle prod or two with a bamboo back-scratcher (two dollars on Mott Street) failed to spur them on.

A man on a bicycle, dressed in a Mickey Mouse T-shirt and missing a few teeth, stopped to watch. "That's the fish!" he said. "The snake-a-head. Public Enemy No. 1. Bush said it—or something like that. That is a dangerous fish."

"It's meant to be a walking fish."

"That's true!" the man said. "Maybe it is sensitive with people around. Animals are sensitive. Maybe if you go away and don't watch him, he'll walk. If you left him alone and put a river over here"—he pointed to the sidewalk—"then forget about it."

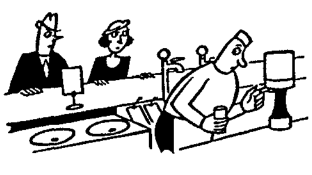
The man was asked what he thought should be done with the fish when the race was over. "Burn him," he said.

After the man was gone, the snakehead started to move. It writhed forward, using its pectoral fins for purchase, like a snake with really short arms. In a couple of seconds it had covered three feet. This wasn't walking, exactly, but it was progress, of a swift and baleful kind. The crab was toast. Bring on the turtle.

Five minutes later, the victor was returned to its tank at Grand Seafood, muddy but very much alive. A refund was out of the question.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT
CITIZEN SPIES



When Oscar Wilde wrote, "There are many things that we would throw away, if we were not afraid that others might pick them up," he probably did not have in mind garbagemen sifting through old magazines and empty takeout cartons for evidence of a terrorist plot. Recently, the Justice Department announced its latest initiative, Operation TIPS (Terrorism Information and Prevention System), a plan to enlist "truckers, letter carriers, train conductors, ship captains, utility employees, and others" as "extra eyes and ears for law enforcement." The "others" would include all those "who, in the daily course of their work, are in a unique position to see potentially unusual or suspicious activity." Fortunately for the Justice Department, many New Yorkers are in that very position. Last week, some of them were asked if they'd seen any potentially unusual or suspicious activity in the daily course of their work.

Skip Rudolph, boat captain, Adios Charter Service (Montauk, New York): "We had an incident on my father's boat with a bunch of ironworkers. They got drunk, tied up the mate, and started climbing up to the wheelhouse, yelling, 'We don't want to go in! We want to catch more fish! We're taking over the boat!' My dad was waiting for them with a .38, and he said, 'Come on in, boys.'"

Andrew Kimble, Jr., Verizon repairman: "Once in a while, someone will answer the door naked, and I'll have to tell them I won't come inside until they put some clothes on. I've seen all kinds of personal things—pictures, magazines, and little gadgets and whatnot. But the thing I keep an eye out for is a big dog or some other kind of vicious pet."

Bill Fries, U.P.S. deliveryman: "I try to stay away from going into someone's apartment. If something gets broken or damaged, they'll blame the U.P.S. guy."

Sandy Sharma, doorman at Flow, a night club: "Most of the people who come here are on the guest list. If their name's not on the list, it doesn't necessarily mean they're a terrorist, but you want to keep them behind the rope, talk to them, assess the situation—you know, 'How are you doing tonight, sir? What's up?' If I feel like something's wrong, I might say, 'Sorry, gents—private party,' and recommend they go somewhere else."

John Malandrino, doorman at Flow: "If six guys in a group come to the door, I don't care what they look like or how they're dressed—they're not getting in."

Chris Florio, hair stylist at Daniel Scott Hair Salon: "I had a very strange-looking client once who apparently had just been released from an institution that day, and she told me that if I didn't do a good job with her hair she'd blow my fucking head off. That was quite odd."

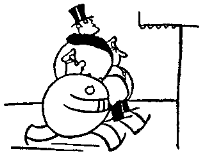
Dr. Gail Saltz, psychoanalyst: "I don't think it's very likely a terrorist would seek treatment. Analysis is a long-term commitment, and it's very time-intensive. It's aimed at highly functioning neurotics, not psychopaths. Analysis is not about dying today to enjoy the next life but about doing the difficult, painful work that will allow you to enjoy the rest of this one."

Thomas Rowles, bartender at Bemelmans Bar: "I don't talk about this place, my drinks, or my customers to anyone for any reason."

Frank Liga, president of Model Driving School: "Last fall, we had a guy who was a little quirky, but we get that all the time. He was very fussy—he wanted a particular truck, a particular instructor, he always wanted his lesson at the exact same time, and he was always late. He paid the full fifteen hundred up front, and everything was cash. The guy was out on a lesson on 9/11 when the planes hit. He ended the lesson half an hour early—asked the instructor to drop him off somewhere on Broadway. He was supposed to take the road test that Friday, but he never showed up. We kept his receipts. The F.B.I., the state police, and the A.T.F. guys all came by, asking questions. They implied that he was part of the plot, that he was connected to the terrorists. Before 9/11, we didn't have any suspicions. Everybody has their own reason for wanting to learn how to drive a tractor-trailer, and if they want to learn it we teach it."

—*Adam Green*

ON THE HILL
OH, BEHAVE

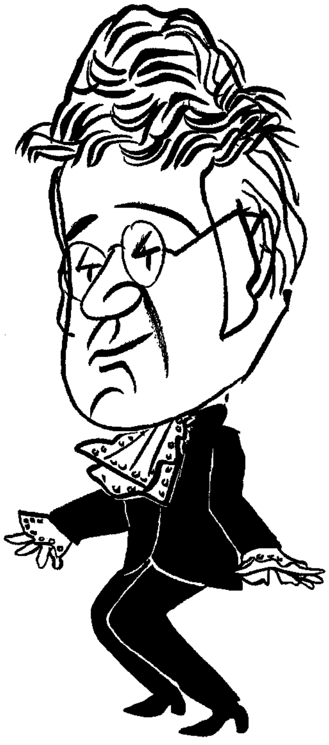


Last Thursday, when the phone rang in the Washington office of the by then former Congressman James Traficant, the only greeting was a singsong intern's voice saying, "Seventeenth District of Ohio." The Congressman's name and title had been banished from both phone and door, along with the Congressman himself, following his conviction on ten felony counts of bribery, tax evasion, and racketeering, and, subsequently, his solemn expulsion from the House by his peers. But, try as his colleagues might to forget him, a few die-hard fans of adolescent antics, polyester suits, and shag hairdos were still savoring Traficant as Capitol Hill's answer to Austin Powers.

"I'll miss him, I really will," said Tony Blankley, the editorial-page editor of the Washington *Times*, who once served as the spokesman for the former Speaker Newt Gingrich. "Traficant's floor statements were wonderfully uninhibited. He said things that most politicians won't say, things that always rang true on some human level." Blankley suggested that Traficant, crooked or not, provided comic relief, somewhat in the tradition of Falstaff. "He wasn't a clown; he was a court jester in the real sense of being the person who can tell the truth to the king."

The final soliloquy that the Congressman delivered last week as he tried to persuade his colleagues to let him continue serving was many things—self-pitying, rambling, occasionally scatological—but it was hardly Shakespearean. He promised that he was "going to get right to the point," but then he veered into a story about "a small army of patriots . . . facing a gigantic army armed to the teeth." He continued, "And the captain, trying to show strength, calls his assistant: 'Go to the tent and get my bright-red vest. . . . The blood will not be seen because of my bright-red vest.' " He explained that the captain "ran out into the battle and was destroyed. His assistant came up, and he called his attendant. He said, 'Go to the tent and get me those dark-brown pants.' " In case this point was lost, the Congressman then added, gleefully, "Think about it! Tonight I have dark-brown pants on!"

Evidently enjoying the immunity from libel and slander that reigns on the House floor, Traficant went on to accuse an F.B.I. agent, by name, of raping one of his constituents, and to call the former Attorney General Janet Reno "a traitor." He contended that his prosecution stemmed from a Justice Department vendetta that dated back to his remarkable success at beating earlier charges. (This prompted Representative Howard Berman to point out that, if so, Traficant was the only known victim of a conspiracy "engineered by Janet Reno and implemented by John Ashcroft.") Traficant then made an admission that would have been unthinkable for a congressman: "I have helped everybody in my district, and every one of these people,



James Traficant

yeah—I did not even like some of them."

If Traficant was not always eloquent, or even comprehensible, Charles Straub, his former press secretary, suggested gamely that this was "part of his brilliance. He looked less smart than he was. It put people off guard. It was part of his mystique as just an average citizen. But he was a very shrewd politician."

In his address, Traficant also described himself as "a fashion leader." Like Austin Powers, Traficant was deliberately fashion-backward, a throwback to an embarrassing time, though not, in his case, to the Swinging Sixties. Instead, he exuded the Age of ABSCAM, a period of muttonchop sideburns, aviator glasses, and heavy-handed graft. In a town that considers neutral an ideology and bland an accomplishment, Traficant may have been the most colorful member of the House. His hair, which he claimed that he cut himself, with "a weed whacker," attained the status of conversation piece. Even those who found little else to admire in him, such as the former New York mayor and congressman Ed Koch, paid it grudging respect. "I must say, the haircut was intriguing," Koch said last week. "Apparently, it's real hair. It looks like artificial turf."

Unfortunately, Traficant backed down from a threat to wear a denim suit in his final appearance in the well of the House, but he did manage to taunt his peers for their sartorial conservatism: "What has happened to us, Congress? Am I different? Yeah. Have I changed my pants? No. Deep down, my colleagues know they want to wear wider bottoms. They are just not secure enough to do it."

That evening, Traficant was required to surrender all House privileges, including his office, his parking pass, and his access to restricted rooms. But it was for his resistance, not his eventual surrender, that he will be best remembered on the Hill. John Sherman, a former speechwriter for another tarnished House member, Dan Rostenkowski, noted that there is a long list of fallen congressmen who went quietly. "Traficant is the only one I can think of who went out hanging on to the lintels and doorjambs," Sherman said. "If you're going to go out, why not go out that way, instead of just slinking off to jail?"

—Jane Mayer

FACE-LIFT DEPT.

GANG GREEN'S NEW YELLOWS

One recent morning, Jay Cross, the president of the New York Jets, was sitting in the Jets' new Manhattan office, in a former Prada showroom on West Fifty-seventh Street. Some walls still bore the mint-green paint of the previous tenants, but the artificial turf in the reception area was the proper green—hunter green, Jets green. Cross, a graduate of Columbia's architecture school and a self-described design junkie, was discussing his campaign to revamp the team's graphics and to introduce Jets fans to good design—a treacherous undertaking, like trying to foist helmets and shoulder pads on the Kirov Ballet. "I'd say that eighty per cent of our fans don't care about design," Cross said. "The rest are at least aware of it—or willing to look the other way to enjoy the sporting event. Our intention is to come up with something that does not offend that eighty per cent, which is a subliminal exercise. It's a tough crowd."

Last August, the Jets launched a new Web site, with help from Pentagram, a design firm that Cross hired "to expand the visual presentation of the team" without altering the original logo or the green-and-white color scheme. "Jets green is hunter. We never considered depriving anyone of that," Michael Bierut, a Pentagram partner, said. "But the Jets were sort of being crushed by tradition. You can only do one thing with hunter, which is to print it on white. It's like trying to write a story with only words that begin with 's.' So we wondered, 'What if the Jets owned all greens?' We redesigned the site, introducing a little bit of yellow to the greens, and people went ape-shit."

Fan protest poured in to the site: "I detest the color scheme. . . . I want Jet green!!!" "This is FOOTBALL for god's sake, not the Gay Pride Parade." "Some genius gets paid big bucks for this?"

"When the site went up, we were too extreme with the colors," Cross said. "So we've backed away. If you get a haircut and no one notices, then it's a good haircut."

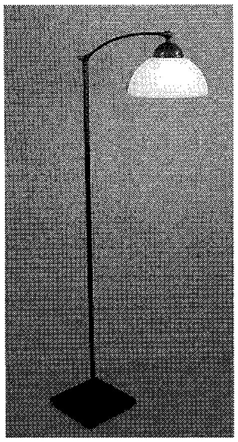
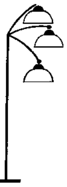
Herman Edwards, the Jets' head coach, also has strong opinions about design and is especially fond of a sleek alternative logo, which, along with the new shades of green, has made its way onto the wall of Giants Stadium, where the team plays, and onto the team's sideline apparel and merchandise. "That 'NY' logo is, to me, just sharp, just clean, just bold," Edwards said. "It's really plain—what you see is what you see—and in *green*, so it can't be the Giants. The players like the look. When you put too much stuff on things, you clutter them up. It's kind of like women. I like a woman who wakes up in the morning and she's beautiful. She doesn't have to spend an hour in the bathroom to get ready. That's what we want for the design."

A few months ago, rumors started going around that Cross's next project would be to fiddle with the uniforms. Promptly, a petition appeared ("Help Us Stop the Pending NY Jets Uniform Change!!") on jetsinsider.com, a fan Web site. By last Friday, as the team reported to training camp, nine hundred and seventy supporters had weighed in. "One never needs to change a classic," the first petitioner, a fan from Wisconsin, wrote. (The only thing that will be different this season, it turns out, is that the Jets will wear green pants in six of their eight home games.)

Ed Anzalone, a.k.a. Fireman Ed, who is renowned for leading cheers in the stands, said, "They don't let me know nothing. You would think the team would at least have the courtesy to let me in when they're doing something new. When they start getting into the yellows, c'mon. What are we now, the Packers?"

"People complain a lot," said Don Schaeffer, a former New York City cop, who has missed only two Jets games since 1977. "If they turn the jerseys purple, people will say, 'That's not our color.' But if it says 'Jets' they'll wear it. Colors and stuff like that don't faze me. Give me any colors, some victories, and you can leave me alone with gallons of brandy Alexanders."

—Amy Goldwasser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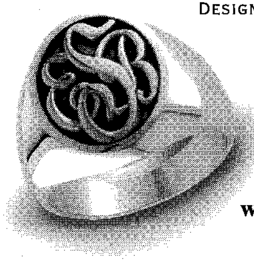
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ANNALS OF CRIME

AN AMERICAN TERRORIST

He's an assassin who fled the country. Could he help Washington now?

BY IRA SILVERMAN

On the evening of July 21, 1980, in Washington, D.C., Dawud Salahuddin, a twenty-nine-year-old African-American convert to Islam who was born David Theodore Belfield, prepared to commit murder. In an empty office at the Iranian Interest Section of the Algerian Embassy, on Wisconsin Avenue, where he worked as a security guard, he loaded a Browning semi-automatic pistol, test-fired it out a window into an alleyway, and stashed it in a gym bag. Then he went to sleep on a couch. The Iranian Embassy had been closed down a few months earlier, as United States relations with Iran continued to deteriorate after the overthrow of the Shah, in early 1979, the installation of the repressive regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, and the ongoing hostage crisis at the American Embassy in Tehran.

The next morning, Salahuddin woke before dawn and prayed. He walked along Wisconsin Avenue to a designated spot, where a friend, also an African-American and a Muslim, met him in a rental car, and together they drove northwest, toward the Maryland border. In the passenger seat, Salahuddin changed into a mailman's uniform and put on a pair of cotton gloves. He stuffed the pistol into a large Jiffy bag. On Idaho Avenue not far from the National Cathedral, another friend, a postal worker, was waiting with a mail-delivery jeep. Salahuddin drove the jeep by himself to Bethesda, Maryland. He stopped at a pay phone outside a diner to call the home of Ali Akbar Tabatabai, a former press attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Washington, who had become an outspoken opponent of Ayatollah Khomeini. When Tabatabai answered, Salahuddin hung up. Minutes later, at around eleven-forty, he parked the jeep in front of Tabatabai's house, on a quiet cul-de-sac, and walked to the door carrying what looked like two special-delivery packages. He held one package, a decoy crammed with newspapers, in front; it obscured the second package, inside which Salahuddin held the pistol in his right hand, his finger on the trigger. The house was used as a meeting place for the Iran Freedom Foundation, a counter-revolutionary group, and one of Tabatabai's associates answered the door. Salahuddin asked for Tabatabai—saying that the delivery required his signature—and when he appeared Salahuddin shot him three times in the abdomen and fled. Forty-five minutes later, at 12:34 P.M., Tabatabai was pronounced dead at Suburban Hospital.

Salahuddin had been keeping a high profile, associating publicly with known Muslim radicals, and the police and the F.B.I. had been aware of him for some time. The morning after the killing, the authorities in Montgomery County, Maryland, obtained a warrant for David Theodore Belfield's arrest on a charge of murder. The plot, which involved many accomplices and dubious alibis, had unravelled quickly. The homicide report described the shooting as a "political assassination," and noted that "the deceased was the founder of an organization whose goal was the overthrow of the present regime in Iran." The killing fit into an over-all scheme of violence precipitated by political upheaval in the Muslim world. In a July 29, 1980, editorial, the Washington *Post* said the murder in Bethesda was "part of a wider pattern" in which insecure Persian Gulf governments "turn to the gun to rid themselves of their expatriate opponents." Eleven days before Salahuddin murdered Tabatabai, gunmen in Paris, posing as reporters, had tried to kill Shahpur Bakhtiar, the last Prime Minister of Iran under the Shah (a later attempt, in 1991, succeeded), and, in December of 1979, a nephew of the Shah had been assassinated, also in Paris.

After shooting Tabatabai, Salahuddin abandoned the jeep a few blocks from the murder scene, where his friend was waiting with the rental car, and they made their way to Montreal. There Salahuddin booked a flight to Paris with a connection to Geneva. On the flight, he picked up a July 24th copy of the *International Herald Tribune* and read a story about the Tabatabai killing. The F.B.I. had identified the "mailman" as David Theodore Belfield, the name on Salahuddin's passport. Somehow, he cleared customs in Geneva, but he had to wait seven days at the Iranian Consulate there for a visa to go on to Iran.

Dawud Salahuddin in a scene from "Kandahar." Friends of the man he murdered recognized him in the movie.

COURTESY AVATAR FILMS

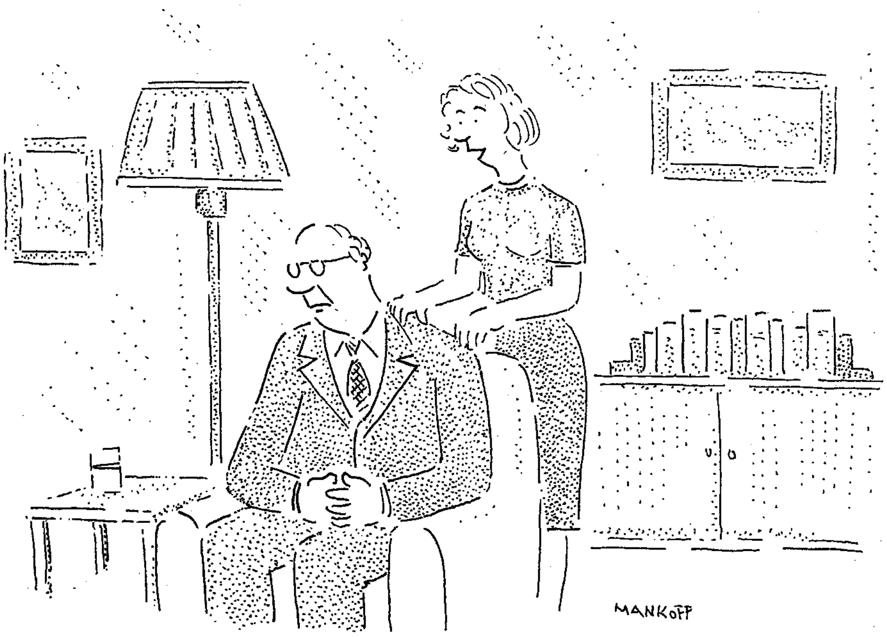
Salahuddin reached Tehran on July 31, 1980. Except for short periods in other Muslim countries and in North Korea, he has been in Iran ever since, and now lives in a comfortable garden apartment in an enclave of Turkish émigrés, about forty-five miles outside Tehran, with his wife, who is Iranian. Salahuddin speaks Farsi and works as a freelance writer.

On the street in Tehran, Salahuddin looks more like a visiting Islamic scholar from Qom than like a murderer. He is about six feet tall, has a closely cropped beard, and wears a knee-length tunic. "Generally, I blend in," Salahuddin said earlier this year. "I could be an Iranian Arab or an Iranian Baluch." He is a cordial, soft-spoken, and, it seems, even-tempered man. Yet he has declared that he is ready to kill again, "in certain circumstances." He also approves of bombing buildings if, in his opinion, they are "symbols of arrogant American power."

Salahuddin is beyond the reach of American law: the United States has no extradition treaty with Iran. Various attempts over the years to bring him to justice have failed. An F.B.I. spokesman told me that he is "unaware of any other approaches" to get Salahuddin back. If he were somehow lured to another country and caught, Salahuddin would face trial in Maryland. "It's an open case," Douglas Gansler, the Montgomery County prosecutor, told me. "The Iranians came here to recruit homegrown terrorists, and they found one in Salahuddin."

C.I.A. officers have maintained a keen interest in him. Although his capture would be a triumph for law enforcement, Salahuddin may be, from an intelligence perspective, more useful left in place. His efforts on behalf of the revolution have afforded him a high level of access to the inner circle of the government, especially among moderates and others interested in rapprochement with the United States. Intelligence sources have also speculated that he could provide information on the Iranian presence in northwestern Afghanistan, a contested area that Pakistan may have designs on. Salahuddin is known to have a close relationship with Ismail Khan, the warlord governing the region around Herat, in western Afghanistan, where American companies have considered building a pipeline for oil from the Caspian Sea, as an alternative to Saudi Arabian oil.

In conversations that took place over five days in Tehran last February, Salahuddin admitted to murdering Tabatabai. "I shot him," Salahuddin said, with no sign of discomfort or remorse, when I asked him about the killing during our first meeting. In a later e-mail, Salahuddin insisted that there was nothing "murderous" in his killing of Tabatabai. "It was an act of war," he wrote, and a religious duty. "In Islamic religious terms, taking a life is sometimes sanctioned and even highly praised, and I thought that event was just such a time." Some interpretations of Islamic law allow for killing when it is seen as a way to protect the



"C'mon, sweetie—you're only as bankrupt as you feel."

• •

Muslim community, and Salahuddin seems to have appropriated this view for his own ends. He was, by his own description, an "angry and alienated" African-American with "a good dose of rage with the American establishment." He told me that if the opportunity to kill Tabatabai had not come along, he is sure that he would have done something else like it, or something on an even larger scale. "I was primed for violence, and I thought about cratering the White House a quarter century before Al Qaeda did," he wrote to me. "It would be accurate to say that my biggest aspiration was to bring America to its knees, but I didn't know how."

Salahuddin grew up in Bay Shore, Long Island, as Teddy Belfield, the third of five children—four boys and a girl—in a churchgoing Baptist family that had moved to New York from North Carolina in the early fifties. His parents both worked at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center, in Brentwood, his mother, Argenta, as a nurse's aide in the wards, his father, Charles, in the laundry room. Charles Belfield moonlighted as a security guard at *Newsday* and as a bouncer at a Bay Shore night club. Salahuddin still refers to America as home, and much of his talk is about his boyhood in Bay Shore: about the Bay Shore Bombers, a fast-pitch softball team; the high-school gymnasium where he first dunked a basketball; and shopping sprees at Ripley's, Lorry's, and Florsheim's. "He was right out of *G.Q.*, with those half-gator shoes, thick-and-thin nylon socks, and a pinkie ring," his sister told me. A high-school friend remembers him as "the all-American boy . . . liked by blacks and whites." Yet throughout his childhood, Salahuddin said, he was deeply troubled by his race. "Maybe the most damage that was done to me as a kid was that it was somehow an indecency, an insufficiency, certainly a shame not to be white." From his earliest years, as a pupil at the predominantly white Brook Avenue Elementary School, in Bay Shore, he said, "I understood that the less black you were, hey, you had a little more breathing space. But you still had a problem." He remembered a project in third grade which required all the students to bring in an ingredient to make soup. One of his classmates, a very dark-skinned boy named Johnny Carter, brought a can of corn. "Now, what I saw," Salahuddin told me, "was when that soup was cooked, all my classmates who I thought were my friends picked the corn out of their soup. And to this day I remember that, and to this day I remember how I felt for Johnny."

In 1963, when he was in seventh grade, Salahuddin watched the television footage of Eugene (Bull) Connor, the police chief of Birmingham, Alabama, turning back civil-rights marchers with fire hoses and attack dogs. He began to develop "an implacable hatred toward all symbols of American authority." By his senior year in high school, he was refusing to salute the flag or say the Pledge of Allegiance. He told his sister to listen to the words of the pledge: "They don't apply to everyone."

These resentments, he said, were nourished by the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., by his reading about slavery, and by what he saw at Johnny White's, the night club where his father worked, in the black section of Bay Shore. "Johnny White's was more instructive than anything else," he said. "It was the repository of all the bad things slavery had done to the minds and hearts of black men." He spent a lot of time there in his early teens, and witnessed barroom violence: shootings and knifings, and bottles broken over people's heads. Salahuddin said that he began drinking at thirteen, getting "blind drunk" a number of times. By the time he was sixteen, he had a gun, and on one occasion pistol-whipped a teen-ager who had stolen a television set from his house. "I was about to shoot him," Salahuddin said, "when another guy grabbed my arm."

All the Belfield children went to college. Teddy entered Howard University, in Washington, in 1968, but he quit after one semester, having lost interest in his classes, and worked as a day laborer on construction projects. "This put me in direct touch with a class of black men that I had known every day of my youth, but now I was working with them," he wrote to me. "These men had no education, rarely a stable family, lots of them were alcoholics, and not one had a future." Salahuddin said he came to believe that "black America is the Third World in a First World setting," and that "it is dangerous and unsustainable for all concerned."

Throughout the years that Salahuddin spent in Washington, his closest non-Muslim friend was a fellow New Yorker who had taken the African name Brother Oleigi, and who is now a recreational therapist working with autistic children in Maryland. Oleigi remembers Salahuddin as an avid reader—

works by W. E. B. DuBois and the historian Carter G. Woodson; Ferdinand Lundberg's "The Rich and the Super-Rich"—"who could quote a passage from a book verbatim and give you the page it was on." Oleigi, however, said that he had no inkling in July, 1980, of what his friend was about to do.

At a loft that was a gathering place for black writers and activists, Salahuddin met a Korean War veteran he admired, who told him, "I'm not talking to you anymore until you read the Koran." When he did, Salahuddin found that Islam was "color-blind." In February, 1969, when he was eighteen, he converted, taking the name Dawud Salahuddin, after the twelfth-century Muslim warrior. Despairing over the future of the black man in America, he joined a fringe organization called the Black Man's Volunteer Army of Liberation, which encouraged urban blacks to return to Africa and become farmers. (He quit after a few months, convinced that the group was a scam and that its leader was a police informer.) During this period, he became the editor of a small Islamic newspaper in Washington and spent much of his time at mosques. Salahuddin also said he had committed "grab and run" robberies of jewelry stores and pawnshops, for which he was never apprehended or charged: "I would ask for the biggest plate of gold they had, dump it into a big, empty pocket in my coat, and out the door."

In the months following his conversion, Salahuddin began to meet Islamic revolutionaries, including some who were later involved in the overthrow of the Shah. He spent time at an Iranian student center that was run by Bahram Nahidian, Ayatollah Khomeini's main operative in the United States. The center, used as a meeting place and a staging area for pro-Khomeini demonstrations, has long since shut down (it is now a private residence), and Nahidian is thought to be living in northern Virginia.

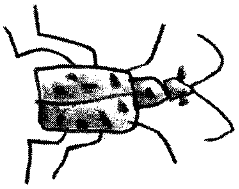
Sometime in the early seventies, Salahuddin began visiting high-security prisons and jails in Washington and its environs. His purpose, he said, was to bring the message of Islam to black inmates. The police suspect that these visits were part of a recruitment effort, possibly paid for by Iran. "The inmates got a twenty-five-cent tour of Islam, but the visits were to find recruits for political activities and violence," a police source told me.

In May of 1975, Salahuddin met Said Ramadan, an Egyptian lawyer and Islamic scholar, who was the guest speaker at a prayer service at the Islamic Center, a large mosque on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington. Ramadan, the founder and head of the Centre Islamique, in Geneva, had been living in exile in Switzerland since the nineteen-fifties. Salahuddin describes Ramadan, who was his adviser and spiritual guide until his death, in 1995, as "the international point man for the Muslim Brotherhood." (The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, was, according to Salahuddin, the inspiration for almost every militant group in the Muslim world. Ramadan's father-in-law was its founder.)

During the summer of 1975, Ramadan stayed with Salahuddin in a house in Washington about a mile from the Howard University campus. They often talked through the night. "I don't think another human being, including my biological parents, knew me any better," Salahuddin said. One subject they discussed was Salahuddin's personality, particularly his capacity for violent action. Ramadan, he said, assured him that if he were to commit such an act he wouldn't be emotionally scarred by it—it would "be accomplished and simply forgotten."

In December of 1979, Salahuddin called Ramadan in Geneva to seek his advice about working for the Iranians as a security guard. It was ten months after the overthrow of the Shah, and Ayatollah Khomeini, now in power in Iran, was on guard against a counter-revolution. Salahuddin said he remembers Ramadan telling him to do everything he possibly could on Khomeini's behalf. "His tone was emphatic," Salahuddin said, "and for me it was taken as a command."

Salahuddin told me that Ramadan hadn't known about his plans to kill Tabatabai, but an article in the Washington *Post* on August 8, 1980, reported that there were three calls around the time of the murder to Ramadan's Geneva home from pay phones near the Iranian diplomatic office. A law-enforcement source involved in the Tabatabai case told me that investigators believed the calls were made by a Salahuddin "handler," a Khomeini operative in the United States, who was not charged in the murder.



The man who recruited him to kill Tabatabai, Salahuddin told me, was "someone in Washington" who was "passing along instructions" from the Iranian government. He would not divulge the identity of his "contact," and would say only that he believes he met him at the Iranian student center: "At no point did I advertise myself as a hit man, though it was clear to people who knew me that I had no profound fear of violence or of the authorities." Salahuddin said that he was given "a chunk of cash" (actually, five thousand dollars) and five weeks to get the job done. "What I regret is my shoddy planning, which put friends of mine behind bars for years," he said. Police and F.B.I. agents found that, in addition to the driver of the rental car and the postal worker, Salahuddin had had at least three other accomplices: one who had rented the getaway car, one who later wiped it clean of fingerprints, and one who staged a hijacking to create an alibi for the postman who had lent Salahuddin his jeep. In all, ten of Salahuddin's associates—most of them African-American Muslims who, like him, had met Iranian revolutionaries at mosques or other Muslim gathering places in Washington—were arrested and prosecuted, five as accomplices in the murder and five on unrelated charges, including bank robberies and illegal gun possession.

The D.C. police intelligence division already had a thick file on Salahuddin. He had been arrested in New York on November 4, 1979—the day the siege of the American Embassy in Tehran began—with Bahram Nahidian, Ayatollah Khomeini's operative, and a group of pro-Khomeini demonstrators who briefly chained themselves to the railings at the crown of the Statue of Liberty and unfurled a banner denouncing the Shah. In the spring of 1980, tensions developed between the conservative leadership of the Islamic Center on Massachusetts Avenue and a group of militant pro-Khomeini Iranians and African-American Muslims. On April 2nd, the director and the assistant director of the center told police that the revolutionary faction was threatening a violent takeover of the mosque. Salahuddin and Nahidian were thought to be the ringleaders. The police feared that the trouble at the mosque might be a ploy to incite police action against Muslims and generate the kind of television images—Muslims at worship being attacked by helmeted police in the nation's capital—that would jeopardize the American hostage situation in Tehran and set off an international call to arms.

Salahuddin described himself as a "time bomb," whose raging anger was harnessed by the Iranian government. When the emissary from Tehran approached Salahuddin about killing Tabatabai, he said he tried without success to get the emissary to authorize him to assassinate two Americans instead. "If you want to make an impact, you don't kill an exiled Iranian," he said he told the emissary. "That's not a big deal." He did not disclose that he had already done his "homework" on the two other targets: Kermit Roosevelt, a former C.I.A. official who had helped bring the Shah to power, in 1953; and Henry Kissinger, whom he had pinpointed because of Kissinger's involvement in the bombing of Cambodia and the coup against Salvador Allende, in Chile. "Did you ever see footage of the attack on Allende in the Presidential Palace?" Salahuddin asked me in Tehran. "Why is that O.K., but an attempt on the White House is a mark of unutterable inhumanity?"

I asked Salahuddin what he thought he would have accomplished by assassinating Kissinger. "It's like this—you deal with a bully," he began. "You go to school the first day, a guy takes your lunch money, and that's going to go on every day of the year until you do something to him that will discourage that kind of behavior." He added that even though he knew there was "an excellent chance" that he would get shot by Kissinger's bodyguards, he was prepared to go ahead. "I don't see myself as being in love with danger," he wrote in an e-mail, but "the excitement of it is a psychic drug and in the midst of potential life-and-death circumstances you understand what it is to be alive."

Salahuddin discovered, in his early years in Iran, that even though he believed in violent jihad, there were limits to his militancy. In the eighties, he said, a branch of Iranian military intelligence asked him to hijack planes, but, he said, "there is something about being trapped inside of something that I would not give in to." He added, "I might do other things if it's just bang and gone, but the idea of keeping people under pressure. . . ."

Salahuddin says that he has received no direct payments from the Iranian government aside from the five thousand dollars for killing Tabatabai. "Some people believe that I am on some special government payroll, but no one has ever given me a sinecure job in Tehran, nor have I ever been subsidized in any meaningful way." He said that he worked briefly for the Revolutionary Guards as an English teacher; that he was the moderator, last year, of a twice-weekly news program on Iranian television; and that for nine years he was an editor, editorial writer, and war correspondent for one of Tehran's four English-language newspapers. Salahuddin told me that in February, 1991, he went to Iraq to cover the Gulf War and obtained an interview with Abu Abbas, the Palestinian terrorist who led the 1985 hijacking of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro.

Salahuddin also travelled in the militant Muslim world as a kind of diplomat for Said Ramadan: "I presented myself as Ramadan's envoy, and that was with his encouragement." Salahuddin wrote that in 1986 he made "certain representations on behalf of Ramadan to Muammar Qaddafi" through one of Qaddafi's cousins, and in 1995 he said he delivered a message from Ramadan to President Burhanuddin Rabbani, in Afghanistan, warning him that the Taliban had ties to the C.I.A. From December of 1986 to May of 1988, Salahuddin said, he served in Afghanistan as a soldier with the mujahideen.

In 1993, shortly after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, when intelligence agents were desperate for information, a former intelligence detective named Carl Shoffler, who served with federal agents on an interagency counter-terrorism task force in Washington, got in touch with Salahuddin. Detective Tom Cauffiel, of the Montgomery County police department, told me, "Carl figured that Dawud might be one of the few people who knew what the bombing was about, and might know what else was on the agenda, what other targets."

Salahuddin began a back-channel relationship with American authorities and talked about returning to the United States to stand trial in the murder of Tabatabai. "I was serious about it at the time," Salahuddin acknowledged, "and Carl was the one guy who might have brought me home."

"The idea," Cauffiel said, "was to use the leverage of the murder to find out what he knows." Salahuddin told Shoffler that the bombing was directly related to the United States military presence in Saudi Arabia—an inflammatory issue among radical Muslims.

On March 5, 1994, at Shoffler's urging, Salahuddin sent a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno. It was his only formal contact with the United States government. In the letter, he laid out his terms "for mediating between the U.S. and certain key figures in the worldwide Islamic movement" and for providing information on some of his "work" for Iran. "The price for this service is freedom from all prosecution to the charges I face in the Bethesda affair," Salahuddin wrote the Attorney General. Salahuddin said that he never received an answer from Reno or from anyone else. A spokesperson for the Department of Justice said that no record of Salahuddin's letter exists. In 1996, before a deal could be worked out, Shoffler died of pancreatitis, and Salahuddin's interest in surrendering faded. He learned of Shoffler's death in an e-mail from a former C.I.A. officer named Jack Platt. "I went through the files and got the e-mail address that Carl was using," Platt told me. Salahuddin, he said, sent him back an e-mail and then called: "He was very distraught. Two times he said, 'I just can't believe it,' and I said, 'Well, you just have to.' "

In May of 2001, Salahuddin resurfaced in an unlikely way: as an actor in the Iranian film "Kandahar," which was shown at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival and released worldwide soon afterward. The film is based on the true story of an exiled Afghan woman's journey home to find a friend who is threatening suicide because of harsh treatment by the Taliban. "Kandahar" created controversy, first in Iran, because it focussed attention on the country's failure to provide schooling for Afghan refugee children, and then in the United States and Europe, for the casting of an accused assassin in a prominent role. (Salahuddin is listed as Hassan Tantai in the credits.) The film's director, in a statement on his Web site, says that he likes to use non-actors in his films, and takes no responsibility for Salahuddin's past. "I am not nosy about their lives," he writes. "I am an artist, not a judge, or a policeman, or an F.B.I. agent." Salahuddin, who refuses to say how he got the part, plays a compassionate American doctor who befriends the Afghan woman. For most of the film, the doctor wears a fake full beard to fit in among the Afghan men, but in one brief scene he removes it. From that scene, a friend of the Tabatabai family recognized Salahuddin and immediately called Mohammad Reza Tabatabai, the twin brother of Ali Akbar. "I was horrified," Tabatabai told me. "By taking off the beard, he was saying, 'O.K., I killed a man, but here I am, a movie star, and nobody can do anything about it.' "

One afternoon, Salahuddin joined me for tea and biscuits in my hotel room. I asked him, as I had several times before, to tell me what he thought of the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center. Was it mass murder? "It was nothing less than that," he answered. "The religion allows you to kill people, but it's very strict about whom you can kill." He went on, "The World Trade Center was obviously a symbolic target and the one the bombers concentrated the most on, yet from a religious point of view Muslims are forbidden to kill civilians and noncombatants. It is something that I have always been very careful about."

Salahuddin told me that, as it happens, one of his cousins was a survivor of the attack on the Pentagon and that his family's doctor in Bay Shore lost a son in the World Trade Center. Nonetheless, he said, to my astonishment, "I had no problem with the Pentagon. I felt sorry for the people who died there, especially the civilians, but in a situation like that they knew where they were working." He added, "If I had to choose a target in Washington, it would be the White House."

When I asked him if he thought Mohamed Atta, one of the pilots who crashed into the towers, was an aberration, he said, "I would think that Egyptian society in particular and Saudi Arabia to a lesser extent have been incubating this type of personality for decades." Iran has tended to use surrogate organizations and operatives for its terrorist activities.

Salahuddin was sharply critical of the regime that had recruited him and given him asylum. "The Iranians of my immediate association turned out to be far from paragons of virtue," he said. "The corruption here among the highest levels of the mullahs is incredible—it includes financial malfeasance, gross human-rights violations, extrajudicial murder, and two systems of justice, one for the mullahs, and one for citizens."

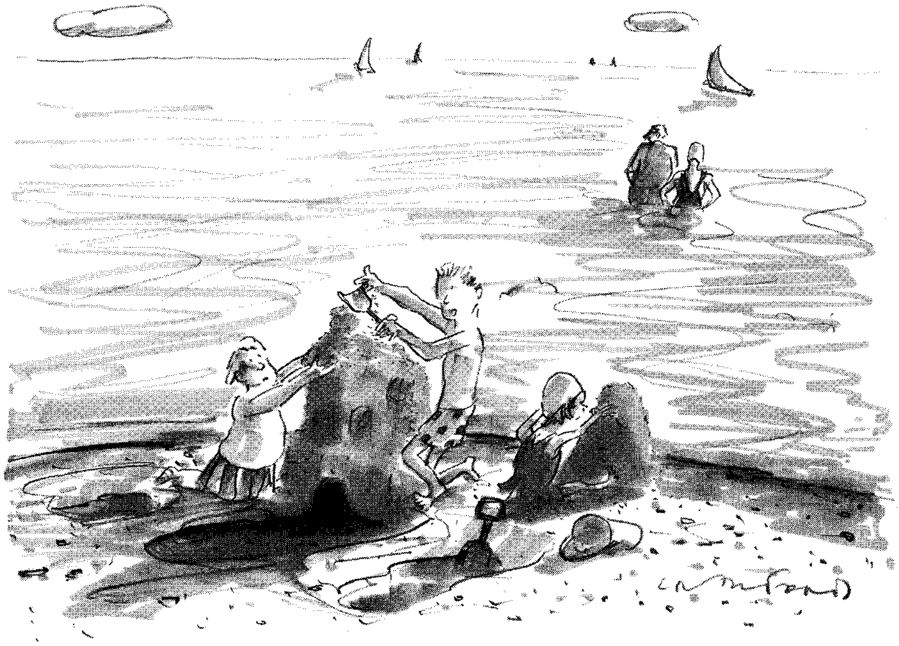
The freedom with which Salahuddin attacks the mullahs suggests an immunity perhaps earned by his successful execution of an "act of war"—or maybe it merely suggests recklessness, for he is well aware of the risk of dissent in Iran. He has told me that his present circumstances are "not sustainable" and, in an e-mail just before my arrival in Tehran, he wrote, "If you don't see me at the airport, it means I am either dead or under arrest."

Salahuddin is clearly looking for a way out of Iran. The events of September 11th and the new paradigm for the revolutionary—suicide—have left him behind. He is restless, and ill at ease in his adopted country.

"What's ahead for you?" I asked him, as we were being driven to the airport along a pitch-black, deserted back road.

"Sitting here right now talking to you, I frankly don't know," he said. "I'm at an impasse." Later, in an e-mail, Salahuddin wrote that he is "in one of those rocky patches of reinvention." He is fighting despair. "Depression is one of the dangers of long exile," he wrote to me. "I suffer from bouts of it. Over the past five years I would say that four months out of the year I am in some degree of mental depression."

One option for Salahuddin is to give himself up and face prosecution for the murder of Tabatabai, but he is unwilling to do this: "The idea that I go home and go to jail is something that I cannot really countenance." Salahuddin said he takes solace in the fact that he is alive. "Had I stayed home, I doubt that I would have made it through the eighties. I am sure that I would not have died of natural causes and equally certain that I would not have died alone." ♦



"You can build it with me, but you can't wreck it with me."

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AND: A calendar of
New Yorker events
across the country

SHOUTS & MURMURS

DEAR CATHERINE M.

BY ANDY BOROWITZ

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Florence Bevins, the Midvale *News-Tribune's* regular advice columnist, is on vacation this week. Substituting for her is Catherine Millet, noted French art critic and author of the new best-selling book "The Sexual Life of Catherine M.")

Dear Catherine M.,

Every time my brother and his wife come to visit, my pill of a sister-in-law has a field day criticizing me. I'm dying to say something about it, but I don't want to put my brother's nose out of joint. What should I do?

Yours,
Sufferin' Sis

Catherine M. writes: As a child, I thought about numbers a great deal. How many husbands would I wed, how many children would I have? When I read your letter, the first number that occurred to me was thirty-seven, as in, the next time your sister-in-law comes to visit, flee your house and have sex with thirty-seven total strangers under the bleachers of the nearest soccer stadium.

Dear Catherine M.,

I'm the chairwoman of the bake-sale committee of my local PTA and I'm scared to death of speaking up at meetings. I've tried public-speaking classes and even hypnosis, but nothing seems to work. Help, Catherine, help!

Yours,
Bashful Baker

Catherine M. writes: I, too, have suffered from painful bouts of shyness, especially after I was elected recording secretary of the most prestigious swingers' club in Paris. Do what I did: at your next meeting, take off all your clothes and spread your naked body out on the meeting table like a Chutes and Ladders board waiting to be played upon. Soon, your shyness will be but a memory, and you'll be reëlected an unprecedented four times.

Dear Catherine M.,

My fiancé and I are having huge fights about the invite list for our wedding. I'm trying to keep the reception small, but he's afraid of excluding people we barely know. Catherine, how can we settle this without killing each other?

Yours,
Miffed in Midvale

Catherine M. writes: The fear of excluding others and thereby offending them is perfectly understandable, whether one is planning a wedding or cavorting with dozens of voracious construction workers in a cramped lean-to on the outskirts of Montmartre. My advice: exclude no one, and, while you're at it, bang the band and the caterers.

Dear Catherine M.,

Last semester, I was suspended from my college football team along with nineteen of my teammates for what the college called "inappropriate behavior" at an off-campus homecoming party. I admit that we got a little wild, but I still think the college administrators overreacted. Should I transfer to another school or stay and fight their decision?

Yours,
Jinxed Jock

Catherine M. writes: Given the gravity of your problem, any written reply from me would run the risk of being glib and unhelpful. Therefore, I suggest that you and your friends board the next plane to Paris and meet me in the Bois de Boulogne at 2 A.M. I'll be naked except for a leather Catwoman mask, my glistening body dripping with olive oil and Pernod. If you still don't see me, keep your eye out for a teeming mass of sweaty bodies writhing in the moonlight like one big, churning mutant sex serpent. I'll be somewhere in the middle of that. Bon voyage. ♦

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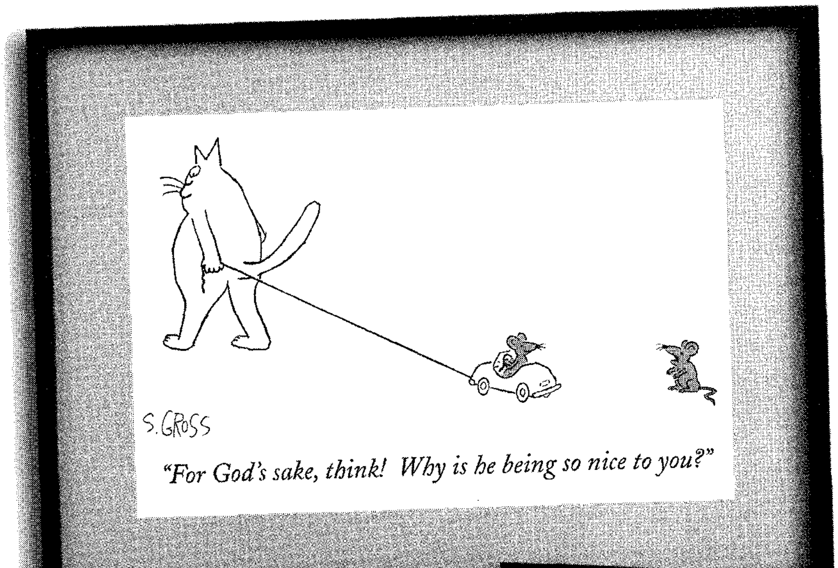

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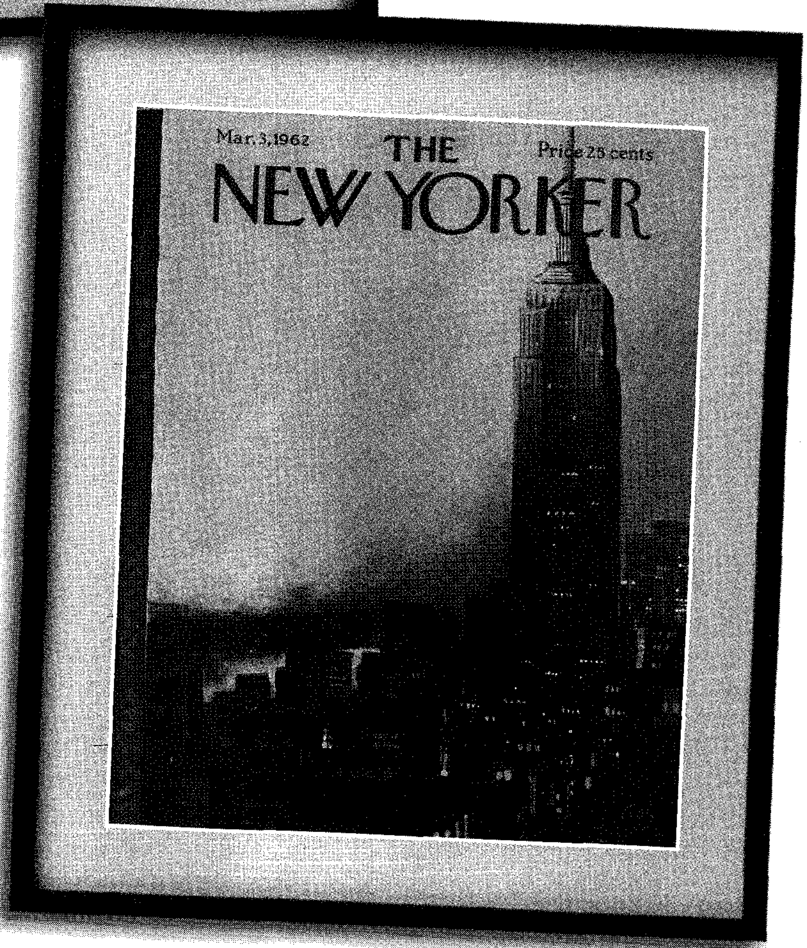

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LETTER FROM CUBA

ROUGH DIAMONDS

Fidel's little leagues.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

Most of the time, the boys in *categoría pequeña*—the Cuban equivalent of Little League baseball—play on days when there hasn't been a coup in Latin America, or at least not in a country that supplies a lot of oil to Cuba. Unfortunately, the Ligeritos, a team made up of kids from the Plaza de la Revolución neighborhood of Havana, had a practice scheduled for the Sunday in April after the President of Venezuela was deposed. The uprising evaporated in a matter of days, but when I went to watch the Ligeritos play it was still fresh news, and many people were staying home and watching television reports on the crisis. Kids who wanted a ride to the practice had to wait out the developing story of the coup.

The practice was supposed to start at nine, but when I arrived there were only a few boys at the ball field. The Ligeritos play at a big and fitfully grassy park called El Bosque, at the end of a narrow neighborhood road. The park is flat and open, bracketed by tall, weary trees, and it has an unevenly paved basketball court at one end and enough room for a few baseball games at the other. That day, a loud game between two government ministries was already under way on the best diamond, and a couple of military police officers were on the basketball court taking foul shots with a flabby orange ball. The handful of boys who'd managed to get to the field had gathered on an overgrown area near the basketball court. One had a ball, one had a bat, and another had the most important equipment for playing baseball in Cuba—some sixteen-inch-long machetes, for grooming the field. While the boys played catch, a few of their fathers stripped to the waist and started slicing through the tall grass.

I had obtained an introduction to Juan Cruz, the Ligeritos' shortstop, through a friend in Havana. Juan is a slip of a kid, eleven years old, with dark, dreamy eyes, long arms, big feet, and the musculature of a grasshopper. His thirteen-year-old brother, Carlos, plays for the Ligeritos, too, but it is Juan who woke up at four every morning during the 2000 Olympics to watch the baseball games and who cradles his glove as if it were a newborn and who always wears a baseball cap, indoors or out. When his stepfather, Víctor, is asked about Juan, he says, "Oh my God, this one dreams in baseball." In spite of the morning's news, Juan had persuaded Víctor to drive Carlos and him to the ball field at nine. He popped out of the car almost before Víctor had finished parking, and ran onto the field.

Juan Cruz with his coach, Máximo García Cárdenas. Photograph by Ernesto Bazan.

The morning was soft and wet, just on the verge of summer. In Havana's Parque Central, a daily assembly of old men were arguing fine points of Yankee and Red Sox history and the likelihood of Havana's Industriales sweeping the upstarts from Camagüey in the national series. The Havana baseball mascot—a fat, placid dachshund wearing a baseball shirt, sunglasses, and a Greek fisherman's hat—was brought to a spot near the trinket market every afternoon for souvenir snapshots. And everywhere boys were playing baseball. They were playing in the parking lot of Estadio Latinoamericano, home of Havana's two teams, the Industriales and the Metropolitanos; and alongside the Malecon seawall, observed by the snobby young hookers who like to line up there and smoke; and in the dense downtown of Old Havana, wherever some building had finally completed its gradual and melodramatic collapse, opening up just enough room to field a pickup game. Every time I came in or out of my hotel, a group of boys were in the street, dodging potholes as big as washtubs, and, whether it was the bright start of the morning or the half-darkness at the end of the day, they were always in the middle of a game.

There has been baseball in Cuba almost as long as there has been baseball anywhere. Introduced in the eighteen-sixties, it has been the dominant sport in the country ever since; volleyball and basketball are distant seconds, and soccer, the prevailing sport in the rest of Latin America, is hardly played. From the start, baseball has been strangely tangled up with politics. Cubans embraced it as a statement of rebellion because it was a modern and sophisticated export from democratic America, rather than an imposition of imperial Spanish culture on the island. It was also played by people of all races, not just the white élite, which added to its political allure, and Cubans fleeing Spanish oppression took it with them to Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.

In 1911, the Cincinnati Reds drafted two Cuban players, the first of more than a hundred to be recruited to the American major leagues over the next fifty years. In the nineteen-forties and fifties, some teams even had full-time scouts in Cuba. It has long been rumored that, in 1942, a scout working for the Washington Senators met with a promising teen-age pitcher named Fidel Castro, a rangy right-hander with velocity but no technique. Castro claims that the team gave him a contract, which he turned down; baseball historians say the Senators never made him an offer. It has also been rumored that he passed on a five-thousand-dollar signing bonus from the New York Giants in order to go to law school. There is no dispute, however, that he remained passionate about the game.

After the revolution, Castro banned most aspects of American popular culture, but baseball was so embedded in Cuba and in his own life—he sometimes pitched for an exhibition team called the Bearded Ones—that it persisted and even expanded, although Castro remade it in the revolutionary spirit. In 1961, he enacted National Decree 83A, which outlawed professional sports in Cuba. Henceforth, all competitive sports would be played by amateurs, the best of whom would receive a small government stipend equivalent to a worker's salary. This would end, as Castro took care to point out, American-style "slave baseball," in which players were bought and sold like property, and in which players and owners—especially owners—were enriched at the expense of the public. Cuban players would represent their home provinces, would never be traded, and would never get rich. The first Cuban national series, in 1962, was, according to Castro, "*el triunfo de la pelota libre sobre la pelota esclava*"—the triumph of free baseball over slave baseball. Cuba's gold medals in the 1992 and 1996 Olympics were celebrated as vindication of revolutionary baseball, and the loss to the United States in Sydney was regarded as a calamity. Castro has said he would like two major-league franchises in the country, so that Cuban teams can regularly prove themselves against Americans. "One day, when the Yankees accept peaceful coexistence with our own country, we shall beat them at baseball, too," he said in a 1974 speech. "Then the advantages of revolutionary over capitalist sport will be shown."

Baseball, with its runs to home, its timeless innings, its harmony between the lone endeavor and the collaboration of a team, has always implied more than athletics. In Cuba, it has also come to describe a social history: the version of baseball you are part of is also the version of Cuba you are part of. There are still scores of retired ballplayers in Cuba who remember the game before the revolution, who hosted American players in the Cuban winter leagues, who might have played a few seasons in Texas or Florida, and whose superstar teammates were scooped up, legally, by American teams. There is a middle generation, players in their twenties and thirties, who were born after Decree 83A and grew up knowing only *la pelota libre*, who saw friends defect to play up north, and who have Castro as an occasional pitching coach and de-facto commissioner of the game. Finally, there are the kids like Juan, in *categoría pequeña*, who are now learning to play. Unless Castro lives to be a hundred, these kids will reach their prime without him—the first generation in three who will have baseball without having Castro telling them how to play the game.

Juan dreams about both Cuban and American baseball. It is illegal to watch American games in Cuba—that is, it is illegal to have satellite television on which you could see the games. But for years Cubans have been sneaking small satellite dishes into the country by painting them to look like decorative platters, and those people who haven't managed to get their own dish often barter for tapes of the major leagues at *categoría pequeña* games. As a result, Juan is now equally loyal to the Yankees and to the Industriales. "My favorites are, for the Cubans, Omar Linares, Germán Mesa,

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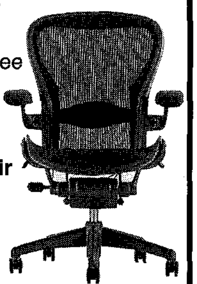

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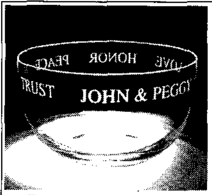

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and Javier Méndez," he says, "and, for the Americans, Derek Jeter, Tino Martinez, and Baby Ruth." When I asked him whom he had rooted for during the Olympics, he just grinned and said, "My team."

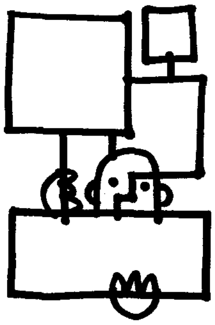
That morning, he was wearing the Ligeritos' uniform, a white jersey with purple raglan sleeves and the team's name in jazzy blue letters across the front, and his favorite hat, an old Albert Belle Cleveland Indians cap that he had got from a friend. I asked him if he was an Albert Belle partisan. "No, I don't really even know him. I just like the picture on the hat," Juan said, referring to the Indians' Chief Wahoo logo. The Ligeritos' neighborhood rivals are the suspiciously counter-revolutionary-sounding Coca-Colas, and the Brigada Especiales, a team sponsored in part by the Special Brigade police, whose barracks are across the street from El Bosque. Even teams with sponsors just squeak by when it comes to equipment. You rarely see wooden bats in Cuba, because of their cost—until two years ago, even the major-league teams used aluminum ones—and new leather gloves are a luxury. Many of the kids I saw playing on the street were barehanded or had gloves that were so limp and splayed that they looked like leather pancakes. The most popular street game in Cuba, four corners (or its variant, three corners), is super-economy baseball—you play it without gloves, and it involves whacking a round thing (rock, bottle cap, ball, wad of tape) with a long thing (tree branch, broom handle, two-by-four) over the heads of your opponents.

While Juan and Carlos took turns swatting at pitches and fielding grounders, Víctor and I sat on a concrete beam lying at the edge of the field. "When I was a kid, I always played four corners," Víctor said. "We had some sewers on our street, and they had those round metal covers, and we just used them as our bases. With us, it was always baseball, baseball, baseball, all the time." He smiled and shook his head. "With these guys, with Juan especially, it's the same. I can't wait to get him a bike so he can take himself to his games."

For some boys in Cuba, it really is baseball all the time: every child in the country is evaluated at the age of five and steered toward a particular sport, and boys favoring baseball begin playing interschool tournaments and join a *categoría pequeña* team. The talented kids are usually well known to the national scouts by the time they're ten. (Presently, there is no baseball program for girls, although a *categoría pequeña* is planned for next year.) At thirteen, the outstanding athletes are admitted to one of fifteen Sports Initiation Schools, the first rung in the Soviet-model athletic program that Castro established in 1961. The very best of those are sent to an Advanced School for Athletic Perfection when they turn sixteen. Castro is especially proud of the system. A billboard in the Havana stadium carries one of his favorite declarations: "Cuba has developed a real and healthy sports culture."

The Ligeritos' coach, Máximo García Cárdenas, was at El Bosque when I arrived, and, after greeting the parents, he called the boys together for some drills. Cárdenas is sixty-five years old. He played professional baseball in Cuba from 1955 to 1960—the last five years that pro ball existed in the country. In 1961, he left for the United States and pitched in the Double-A Texas League; he spent the next fourteen years with various teams in Mexico. When he returned to Cuba, he went to work for the National Commission of Baseball as a pitching coach for the Cuban national team. He has been coaching the Ligeritos for four years. He has known baseball before and during Castro, and likes to keep his hand in the baseball that will come after him. "Some of these boys are very, very good," he said during a break. "Watch Héctor, this one." He gestured toward a wiry boy wearing the team jersey, Snoopy socks, and black Nike sneakers. The boy noticed Cárdenas pointing toward him, so he crouched and put out his glove and got a tough look on his face. "That one might really be something," Cárdenas went on, keeping his eyes on the boy as he spoke. "He could really be something."

By ten, the news from Venezuela must have been drying up, because a dozen more boys appeared, fanned out, and started throwing to each other, ducking around the men who were still clearing the field with machetes. The kids were dressed in an international array of T-shirts advertising Mexican rock groups, Korean cars, Canadian concert tours, and American baseball teams; all of them were slight and tan and excited, too earnest to horse around much, and yet old enough to affect a little bluster. Now that most of the team was in place, Cárdenas started another series of drills, hollering at the boys to move quickly and watch the ball. They practiced for ten minutes or so, and then Cárdenas called them together near the scrap of cardboard that was marking third base. He divided them into two squads for the practice game, and then turned to Héctor, who was the captain of the team. Héctor stood at attention in front of him, and the rest of the boys lined up to the side. "Are you and your colleagues ready?" Cárdenas asked him.



"My colleagues and I are ready," Héctor said.

The boys yelled, "Ready!"

"Are you ready to play for the good of the team?" Cárdenas asked.

"We are ready," Héctor said.

The boys again yelled, "Ready!" They jostled each other and crowded closer to Cárdenas.

"Who owns the right to sports?" Cárdenas asked.

The boys chanted, "*El deporte es un derecho del pueblo!*" ("Sport is the right of the people"—one of Castro's trademark slogans.)

"Tell me again?"

"Sport is the right of the people!"

"Once more?"

"Sport is the right of the people!" they yelled, and then scrambled to their positions on the field.

Juan says that if he doesn't get to play baseball professionally he would like to be an investigator, a policeman, a doctor, or a hero. "Those would be O.K.," he says, "but I would like to be a baseball player." He says he would be happy to have his career either in Cuba or in the United States, although he likes Cuban baseball more than American. "The Cubans play for fun, not for money," he explained to me between innings. I asked him what he thought of American athletes, and he said, "They play only for the millions. A real player plays because he likes baseball and doesn't need that much money to live a normal life."

At the top of the second inning, Javier Méndez, an outfielder for the Industriales and one of Juan's heroes, stopped by El Bosque with his four-year-old son, Javier, Jr. Méndez is broad-chested and sturdy, with meaty arms and legs, and he has a goatee and a buzz cut and big dimples. That morning, he was wearing Oakley sunglasses, an Olympic Web-site T-shirt, and a cast on his right hand. Méndez is thirty-seven years old and a huge star in Cuba. He had been on pace to tie the Cuban record for lifetime doubles and to get his two-thousandth hit—something only ten other Cuban players have managed—when he was struck by a pitch and had to end his season. He had hoped to retire this year, but he wants to polish off those records. "Next season," he said, flexing the fingers of his injured hand, "if all goes well."

Méndez had come by to visit a friend whose son played for the Ligeritos, but it was also a chance to let Little Javier take a few swings. The boy was dressed in a tiny, spotless Industriales uniform and an oversized batting helmet. When he swung, the bat nearly toppled him. When he finally hit a pitch, he toddled straight to second base. "Javi, tag first! Tag first!" Méndez shouted. He yelled something to Cárdenas, and they both started laughing. "Oh my God, look at him," Méndez said. "Well, I wasn't any good when I was young. I was weak and really small. I just practiced and persevered. I grew up in a fishing village but I didn't know how to fish, so I played baseball. But I wasn't any good until I was sixteen."

Méndez has been on one Olympic team and won a slew of national championships. The Cuban government allowed its players to take sabbaticals in Japan in the early nineties, and Méndez and a few other Cubans played there for two seasons, but he subsequently returned to his team, at around the time that the pitcher Liván Hernández defected to play in the United States. Just a few years later, Méndez's teammate (and Liván's older brother) Orlando Hernández also defected, and signed a multimillion-dollar contract with the Yankees. Star athletes in Cuba often receive gifts from the government—cars, houses, equipment—but most of the time their compensation is measly. A few days after the Ligeritos' practice, when I took Juan and Carlos to a major-league game between Havana's Metropolitanos and Camagüey, a vender offered to sell me not only coffee, cigars, and potato croquettes but, for fifteen dollars, any of the players' hats or shirts—as soon as they were done using them in the game.

Méndez has played one game in the United States. On May 3, 1999, the Cuban national team played the Baltimore Orioles at Camden Yards, as part of a cultural exchange that had begun in March, when the Orioles played the national team in Havana. The Cubans won the game in Baltimore, 12-6, suffered an interruption during the fifth inning when an anti-Castro protester ran onto the field, and lost one pitching coach, who defected afterward. The game was nevertheless considered a success—the beginning of what was being called "baseball diplomacy." Méndez loved playing in Baltimore and said it was a shame about the defection, especially since it might interfere with any future games. "You know, it's hard when anyone on the team leaves for other countries," he said. "It's hard on the team. It's hard on the fans. It makes people very depressed."

I asked him if it was a good life, to be a Cuban baseball star.

He watched the next boy come up to the plate and slap at a pitch. "It's a good life," he said, "in a sense."

The boys drifted over to see Méndez, most of them too shy to get close or say anything when he asked them how they were doing. He watched the game intently, applauding the good hits and the good catches, shouting encouragement and corrections along with Cárdenas, as if this were the most important game in the world, a big-league game, a game he might play in now, or one that Cárdenas starred in forty years ago, rather than a matchup between gawky boys on a ragged field on a quiet street in Havana.

It was now midday and the game was over. Juan had had a great morning: not only had he hit a single and a double and made one flashy catch—a hard-hit bad-hopping shot from Héctor—but he had got up the nerve to ask Méndez to pose with him for a photograph. Even after the other boys had headed off, Juan wanted to keep hitting, but his father said it was time to go home. ◆

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ANNALS OF PSYCHOLOGY

THE NAKED FACE

Can you read people's thoughts just by looking at them?

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

Some years ago, John Yarbrough was working patrol for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. It was about two in the morning. He and his partner were in the Willowbrook section of South Central Los Angeles, and they pulled over a sports car. "Dark, nighttime, average stop," Yarbrough recalls. "Patrol for me was like going hunting. At that time of night in the area I was working, there was a lot of criminal activity, and hardly anyone had a driver's license. Almost everyone had something intoxicating in the car. We stopped drunk drivers all the time. You're hunting for guns or lots of dope, or suspects wanted for major things. You look at someone and you get an instinctive reaction. And the longer you've been working the stronger that instinctive reaction is."

Yarbrough was driving, and in a two-man patrol car the procedure is for the driver to make the approach and the officer on the passenger side to provide backup. He opened the door and stepped out onto the street, walking toward the vehicle with his weapon drawn. Suddenly, a man jumped out of the passenger side and pointed a gun directly at him. The two of them froze, separated by no more than a few yards. "There was a tree behind him, to his right," Yarbrough recalls. "He was about seventeen. He had the gun in his right hand. He was on the curb side. I was on the other side, facing him. It was just a matter of who was going to shoot first. I remember it clear as day. But for some reason I didn't shoot him." Yarbrough is an ex-marine with close-cropped graying hair and a small mustache, and he speaks in measured tones. "Is he a danger? Sure. He's standing there with a gun, and what person in his right mind does that facing a uniformed armed policeman? If you looked at it logically, I should have shot him. But logic had nothing to do with it. Something just didn't feel right. It was a gut reaction not to shoot—a hunch that at that exact moment he was not an imminent threat to me." So Yarbrough stopped, and, sure enough, so did the kid. He pointed a gun at an armed policeman on a dark street in South Central L.A., and then backed down.

Yarbrough retired last year from the sheriff's department after almost thirty years, sixteen of which were in homicide. He now lives in western Arizona, in a small, immaculate house overlooking the Colorado River, with pictures of John Wayne, Charles Bronson, Clint Eastwood, and Dale Earnhardt on the wall. He has a policeman's watchfulness: while he listens to you, his eyes alight on your face, and then they follow your hands, if you move them, and the areas to your immediate left and right—and then back again, in a steady cycle. He grew up in an affluent household in the San Fernando Valley, the son of two doctors, and he is intensely analytical: he is the sort to take a problem and break it down, working it over slowly and patiently in his mind, and the incident in Willowbrook is one of those problems. Policemen shoot people who point guns directly at them at two in the morning. But something he saw held him back, something that ninety-nine people out of a hundred wouldn't have seen.

Many years later, Yarbrough met with a team of psychologists who were conducting training sessions for law enforcement. They sat beside him in a darkened room and showed him a series of videotapes of people who were either lying or telling the truth. He had to say who was doing what. One tape showed people talking about their views on the death penalty and on smoking in public. Another featured a series of nurses who were all talking about a nature film they were supposedly watching, even though some of them were actually watching grisly documentary footage about burn victims and amputees. It may sound as if the tests should have been easy, because we all think we can tell whether someone is lying. But these were not the obvious fibs of a child, or the prevarications of people whose habits and tendencies we know well. These were strangers who were motivated to deceive, and the task of spotting the liars turns out to be fantastically difficult. There is just too much information—words, intonation, gestures, eyes, mouth—and it is impossible to know how the various cues should be weighted, or how to put them all together, and in any case it's all happening so quickly that you can't even follow what you think you ought to follow. The tests have been given to policemen, customs officers, judges, trial lawyers, and psychotherapists, as well as to officers from the F.B.I., the C.I.A., the D.E.A., and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms—people one would have thought would be good at spotting lies. On average, they score fifty per cent, which is to say that they would have done just as well if they hadn't watched the tapes at all and just guessed. But every now and again—roughly one time in a thousand—someone scores off the charts. A Texas Ranger named David Maxwell did extremely well, for example, as did an ex-A.T.F. agent named J. J. Newberry, a few therapists, an arbitrator, a vice cop—and John Yarbrough, which suggests that what happened in Willowbrook may have been more than a fluke or a lucky guess. Something in our faces signals whether we're going to shoot, say, or whether we're lying about the film we just saw. Most of us aren't very good at spotting it. But a handful of people are virtuosos. What do they see that we miss?

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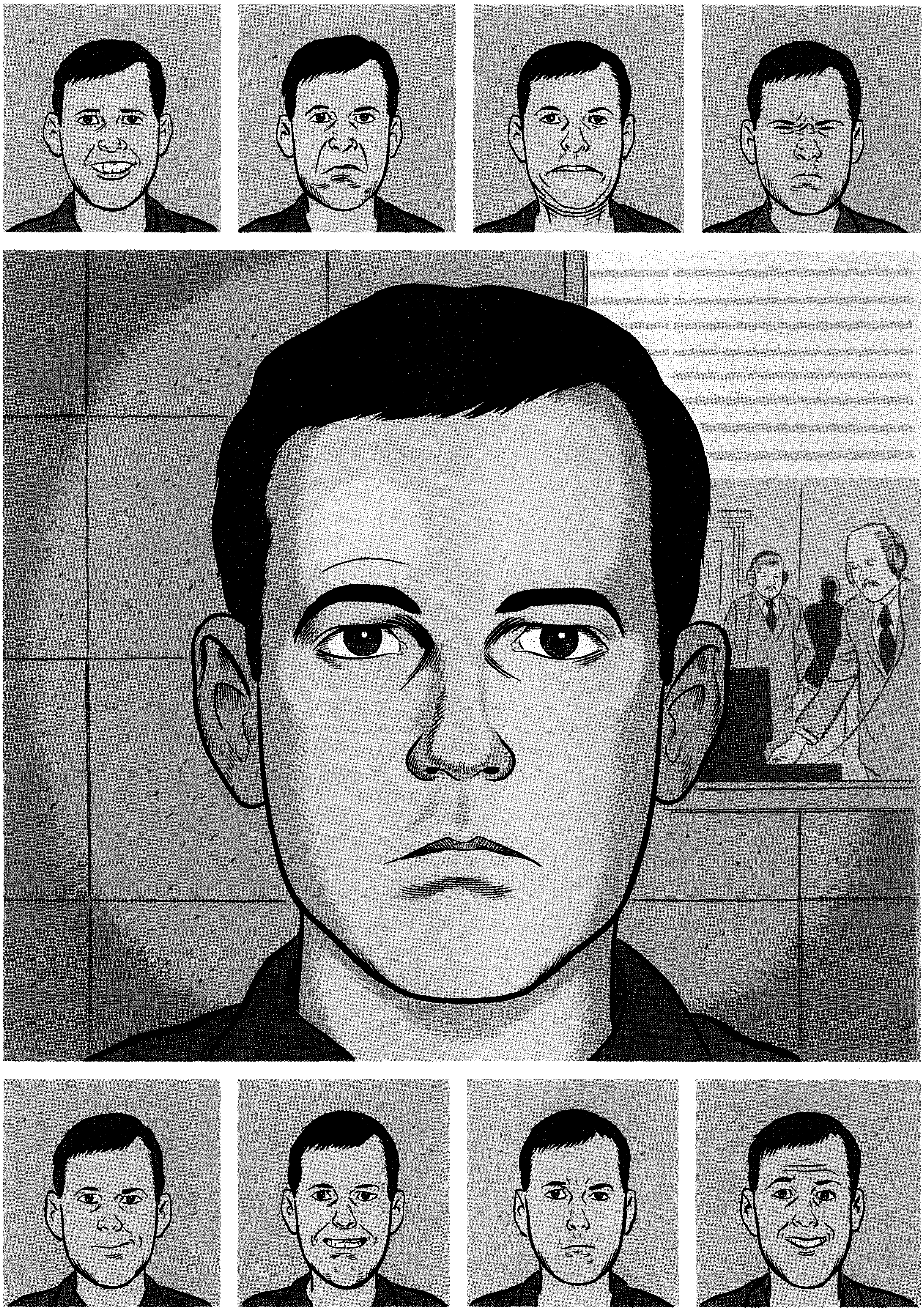

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tle signals, so that, even though he or she may have talked in a normal and friendly manner, afterward we say, "I don't think he liked me," or "I don't think she's very happy." We easily parse complex distinctions in facial expression. If you saw me grinning, for example, with my eyes twinkling, you'd say I was amused. But that's not the only way we interpret a smile. If you saw me nod and smile exaggeratedly, with the corners of my lips tightened, you would take it that I had been teased and was responding sarcastically. If I made eye contact with someone, gave a small smile and then looked down and averted my gaze, you would think I was flirting. If I followed a remark with an abrupt smile and then nodded, or tilted my head sideways, you might conclude that I had just said something a little harsh, and wanted to take the edge off it. You wouldn't need to hear anything I was saying in order to reach these conclusions. The face is such an extraordinarily efficient instrument of communication that there must be rules that govern the way we interpret facial expressions. But what are those rules? And are they the same for everyone?

In the nineteen-sixties, a young San Francisco psychologist named Paul Ekman began to study facial expression, and he discovered that no one knew the answers to those questions. Ekman went to see Margaret Mead, climbing the stairs to her tower office at the American Museum of Natural History. He had an idea. What if he travelled around the world to find out whether people from different cultures agreed on the meaning of different facial expressions? Mead, he recalls, "looked at me as if I were crazy." Like most social scientists of her day, she believed that expression was culturally determined—that we simply used our faces according to a set of learned social conventions. Charles Darwin had discussed the face in his later writings; in his 1872 book, "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals," he argued that all mammals show emotion reliably in their faces. But in the nineteen-sixties academic psychologists were more interested in motivation and cognition than in emotion or its expression. Ekman was undaunted; he began travelling to places like Japan, Brazil, and Argentina, carrying photographs of men and women making a variety of distinctive faces. Everywhere he went, people agreed on what those expressions meant. But what if people in the developed world had all picked up the same cultural rules from watching the same movies and television shows? So Ekman set out again, this time making his way through the jungles of Papua New Guinea, to the most remote villages, and he found that the tribesmen there had no problem interpreting the expressions, either. This may not sound like much of a breakthrough. But in the scientific climate of the time it was a revelation. Ekman had established that expressions were the universal products of evolution. There were fundamental lessons to be learned from the face, if you knew where to look.

Paul Ekman is now in his sixties. He is clean-shaven, with closely set eyes and thick, prominent eyebrows, and although he is of medium build, he seems much larger than he is: there is something stubborn and substantial in his demeanor. He grew up in Newark, the son of a pediatrician, and entered the University of Chicago at fifteen. He speaks deliberately: before he laughs, he pauses slightly, as if waiting for permission. He is the sort to make lists, and number his arguments. His academic writing has an orderly logic to it; by the end of an Ekman essay, each stray objection and problem has been gathered up and catalogued. In the mid-sixties, Ekman set up a lab in a ramshackle Victorian house at the University of California at San Francisco, where he holds a professorship. If the face was part of a physiological system, he reasoned, the system could be learned. He set out to teach himself. He treated the face as an adventurer would a foreign land, exploring its every crevice and contour. He assembled a videotape library of people's facial expressions, which soon filled three rooms in his lab, and studied them to the point where he could look at a face and pick up a flicker of emotion that might last no more than a fraction of a second. Ekman created the lying tests. He filmed the nurses talking about the movie they were watching and the movie they weren't watching. Working with Maureen O'Sullivan, a psychologist from the University of San Francisco, and other colleagues, he located people who had a reputation for being uncannily perceptive, and put them to the test, and that's how Yarbrough and the other high-scorers were identified. O'Sullivan and Ekman call this study of gifted face readers the Diogenes Project, after the Greek philosopher of antiquity who used to wander around Athens with a lantern, peering into people's faces as he searched for an honest man. Ekman has taken the most vaporous of sensations—the hunch you have about someone else—and sought to give them definition. Most of us don't trust our hunches, because we don't know where they came from. We think they can't be explained. But what if they can?

Paul Ekman got his start in the face-reading business because of a man named Silvan Tomkins, and Silvan Tomkins may have been the best face reader there ever was. Tomkins was from Philadelphia, the son of a dentist from Russia. He was short, and slightly thick around the middle, with a wild mane of white hair and huge black plastic-rimmed glasses. He taught psychology at Princeton and Rutgers, and was the author of "Affect, Imagery, Consciousness," a four-volume work so dense that its readers were evenly divided between those who understood it and thought it was brilliant and those who did not understand it and thought it was brilliant. He was a legendary talker. At the end of a cocktail party, fifteen people would sit, rapt, at Tomkins's feet, and someone would say, "One more question!" and they would all sit there for another hour and a half, as Tomkins held forth on, say, comic books, a television sitcom, the biology of emotion, his problem with Kant, and his enthusiasm for the latest fad diets, all enfolded into one extended riff. During the Depression, in the midst of his doctoral studies at Harvard, he worked as a handicapper for a horse-racing syndicate, and was so successful that he lived lavishly on Manhattan's Upper East Side. At the track, where he sat in the stands for hours, staring at the horses through binoculars, he was known as the Professor. "He had a system for predicting how a horse would do based on what horse was on either side of him, based on their emotional relationship," Ekman said. If a male horse, for instance, had lost to a mare in his first or second year, he would be ruined if he went to the gate with a mare next to him in the lineup. (Or something like that—no one really knew for certain.) Tomkins felt that emotion was the code to life, and that with enough attention to particulars the code could be cracked. He thought this about the horses, and, more important, he thought this about the human face.

Tomkins, it was said, could walk into a post office, go over to the "Wanted" posters, and, just by looking at mug shots, tell you what crimes the various fugitives had committed. "He would watch the show 'To Tell the Truth,' and without fault he could always pick the person who was lying and who his confederates were," his son, Mark, recalls. "He actually wrote the producer at one point to say it was too easy, and the man invited him to come to New York, go backstage, and show his stuff." Virginia Demos, who teaches psychology at Harvard, recalls having long conversations with Tomkins. "We would sit and talk on the phone, and he would turn the sound down as Jesse Jackson was talking to Michael Dukakis, at the Democratic National Convention. And he would read the faces and give his predictions on what would happen. It was profound."

Ekman's most memorable encounter with Tomkins took place in the late sixties. Ekman had just tracked down a hundred thousand feet of film that had been shot by the virologist Carleton Gajdusek in the remote jungles of Papua New Guinea. Some of the footage was of a tribe called the South Fore, who were a peaceful and friendly people. The rest was of the Kukukuku, who were hostile and murderous and who had a homosexual ritual where pre-adolescent boys were required to serve as courtesans for the male elders of the tribe. Ekman was still working on the problem of whether human facial expressions were universal, and the Gajdusek film was invaluable. For six months, Ekman and his collaborator, Wallace Friesen, sorted through the footage. They cut extraneous scenes, focussing just on closeups of the faces of the tribesmen, and when the editing was finished Ekman called in Tomkins.

The two men, protégé and mentor, sat at the back of the room, as faces flickered across the screen. Ekman had told Tomkins nothing about the tribes involved; all identifying context had been edited out. Tomkins looked on intently, peering through his glasses. At the end, he went up to the screen and pointed to the faces of the South Fore. "These are a sweet, gentle people, very indulgent, very peaceful," he said. Then he pointed to the faces of the Kukukuku. "This other group is violent, and there is lots of evidence to suggest homosexuality." Even today, a third of a century later, Ekman cannot get over what Tomkins did. "My God! I vividly remember saying, 'Silvan, how on earth are you doing that?' " Ekman recalls. "And he went up to the screen and, while we played the film backward, in slow motion, he pointed out the particular bulges and wrinkles in the face that he was using to make his judgment. That's when I realized, 'I've got to unpack the face.' It was a gold mine of information that everyone had ignored. This guy could see it, and if

"Have you tried finessing her?"

he could see it, maybe everyone else could, too."

Ekman and Friesen decided that they needed to create a taxonomy of facial expressions, so day after day they sat across from each other and began to make every conceivable face they could. Soon, though, they realized that their efforts weren't enough. "I met an anthropologist, Wade Seaford, told him what I was doing, and he said, 'Do you have this movement?' "—and here Ekman contracted what's called the triangularis, which is the muscle that depresses the corners of the lips, forming an arc of distaste—"and it wasn't in my system, because I had never seen it before. I had built a system not on what the face can do but on what I had seen. I was devastated. So I came back and said, 'I've got to learn the anatomy.' " Friesen and Ekman then combed through medical textbooks that outlined each of the facial muscles, and identified every distinct muscular movement that the face could make. There were forty-three such movements. Ekman and Friesen called them "action units." Then they sat across from each other again, and began manipulating each action unit in turn, first locating the muscle in their mind and then concentrating on isolating it, watching each other closely as they did, checking their movements in a mirror, making notes of how the wrinkle patterns on their faces would change with each muscle movement, and videotaping the movement for their records. On the few occasions when they couldn't make a particular movement, they went next door to the U.C.S.F. anatomy department, where a surgeon they knew would stick them with a needle and electrically stimulate the recalcitrant muscle. "That wasn't pleasant at all," Ekman recalls. When each of those action units had been mastered, Ekman and Friesen began working action units in combination, layering one movement on top of another. The entire process took seven years. "There are three hundred combinations of two muscles," Ekman says. "If you add in a third, you get over four thousand. We took it up to five muscles, which is over ten thousand visible facial configurations." Most of those ten thousand facial expressions don't mean anything, of course. They are the kind of nonsense faces that children make. But, by working through each action-unit combination, Ekman and Friesen identified about three thousand that did seem to mean something, until they had catalogued the essential repertoire of human emotion.

"I'm leaving public life so I can spend more time with my lawyers."

On a recent afternoon, Ekman sat in his office at U.C.S.F., in what is known as the Human Interaction Laboratory, a standard academic's lair of books and files, with photographs of his two heroes, Tomkins and Darwin, on the wall. He leaned forward slightly, placing his hands on his knees, and began running through the action-unit configurations he had learned so long ago. "Everybody can do action unit four," he began. He lowered his brow, using his depressor glabellae, depressor supercilli, and corrugator. "Almost everyone can do A.U. nine." He wrinkled his nose, using his levator labii superioris, alaeque nasi. "Everybody can do five." He contracted his levator palpebrae superioris, raising his upper eyelid.

I was trying to follow along with him, and he looked up at me. "You've got a very good five," he said generously. "The more deeply set your eyes are, the harder it is to see the five. Then there's seven." He squinted. "Twelve." He flashed a smile, activating the zygomatic major. The inner parts of his eyebrows shot up.

"That's A.U. one—distress, anguish." Then he used his frontalis, pars lateralis, to raise the outer half of his eyebrows. "That's A.U. two. It's also very hard, but it's worthless. It's not part of anything except Kabuki theatre. Twenty-three is one of my favorites. It's the narrowing of the red margin of the lips. Very reliable anger sign. It's very hard to do voluntarily." He narrowed his lips. "Moving one ear at a time is still the hardest thing to do. I have to really concentrate. It takes everything I've got." He laughed. "This is something my daughter always wanted me to do for her friends. Here we go." He wiggled his left ear, then his right ear. Ekman does not appear to have a particularly expressive face. He has the demeanor of a psychoanalyst, watchful and impassive, and his ability to transform his face so easily and quickly was astonishing. "There is one I can't do," he went on. "It's A.U. thirty-nine. Fortunately, one of my postdocs can do it. A.U. thirty-eight is dilating the nostrils. Thirty-nine is the opposite. It's the muscle that pulls them down." He shook his head and looked at me again. "Oooh! You've got a fantastic thirty-nine. That's one of the best I've ever seen. It's genetic. There should be other members of your family who have this heretofore unknown talent. You've got it, you've got it." He laughed again. "You're in a position to flash it at people. See, you should try that in a singles bar!"

Gahan Wilson

"If he wants it, let him have it."

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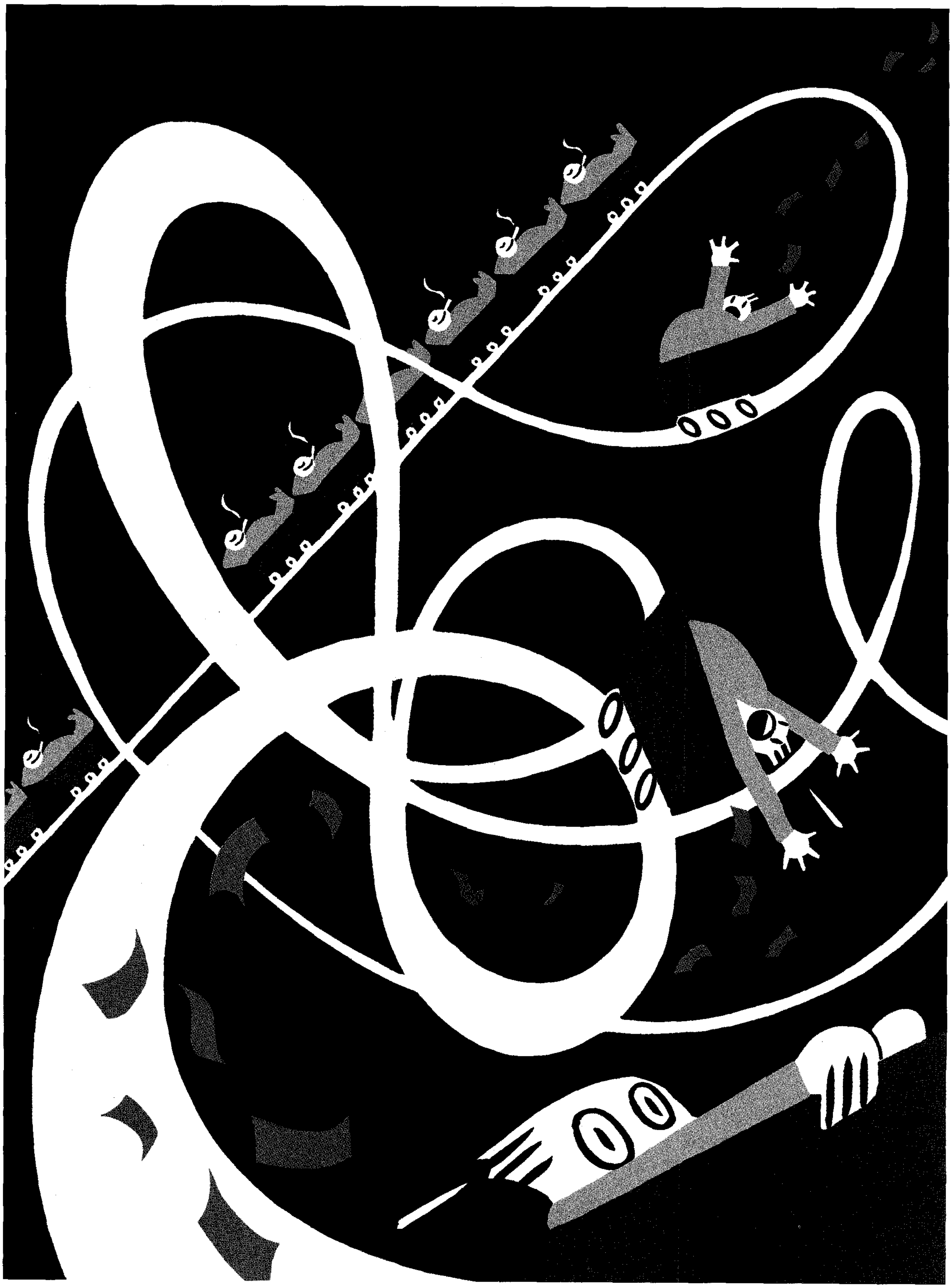
Ekman then began to layer one action unit on top of another, in order to compose the more complicated facial expressions that we generally recognize as emotions. Happiness, for instance, is essentially A.U. six and twelve—contracting the muscles that raise the cheek (orbicularis oculi, pars orbitalis) in combination with the zygomatic major, which pulls up the corners of the lips. Fear is A.U. one, two and four, or, more fully, one, two, four, five, and twenty, with or without action units twenty-five, twenty-six, or twenty-seven. That is: the inner brow raiser (frontalis, pars medialis) plus the outer brow raiser (frontalis, pars lateralis) plus the brow-lowering depressor supercilli plus the levator palpebrae superioris (which raises the upper lid), plus the risorius (which stretches the lips), the parting of the lips (depressor labii), and the masseter (which drops the jaw). Disgust? That's mostly A.U. nine, the wrinkling of the nose (levator labii superioris, alaeque nasi), but it can sometimes be ten, and in either case may be combined with A.U. fifteen or sixteen or seventeen.

Ekman and Friesen ultimately assembled all these combinations—and the rules for reading and interpreting them—into the Facial Action Coding System, or FACS, and wrote them up in a five-hundred-page binder. It is a strangely riveting document, full of details like the possible movements of the lips (elongate, de-elongate, narrow, widen, flatten, protrude, tighten and stretch); the four different changes of the skin between the eyes and the cheeks (bulges, bags, pouches, and lines); or the critical distinctions between infraorbital furrows and the nasolabial furrow. Researchers have employed the system to study everything from schizophrenia to heart disease; it has even been put to use by computer animators at Pixar ("Toy Story"), and at DreamWorks ("Shrek"). FACS takes weeks to master in its entirety, and only five hundred people around the world have been certified to use it in research. But for those who have, the experience of looking at others is forever changed. They learn to read the face the way that people like John Yarbrough did intuitively. Ekman compares it to the way you start to hear a symphony once you've been trained to read music: an experience that used to wash over you becomes particularized and nuanced.

Ekman recalls the first time he saw Bill Clinton, during the 1992 Democratic primaries. "I was watching his facial expressions, and I said to my wife, 'This is Peck's Bad Boy,' " Ekman says. "This is a guy who wants to be caught with his hand in the cookie jar, and have us love him for it anyway. There was this expression that's one of his favorites. It's that hand-in-the-cookie-jar, love-me-Mommy-because-I'm-a-rascal look. It's A.U. twelve, fifteen, seventeen, and twenty-four, with an eye roll." Ekman paused, then reconstructed that particular sequence of expressions on his face. He contracted his zygomatic major, A.U. twelve, in a classic smile, then tugged the corners of his lips down with his triangularis, A.U. fifteen. He flexed the mentalis, A.U. seventeen, which raises the chin, slightly pressed his lips together in A.U. twenty-four, and finally rolled his eyes—and it was as if Slick Willie himself were suddenly in

BUY AND HOLD ON TIGHT BY RICHARD McGUIRE



the room. "I knew someone who was on his communications staff. So I contacted him. I said, 'Look, Clinton's got this way of rolling his eyes along with a certain expression, and what it conveys is "I'm a bad boy." I don't think it's a good thing. I could teach him how not to do that in two to three hours.' And he said, 'Well, we can't take the risk that he's known to be seeing an expert on lying.' I think it's a great tragedy, because . . ." Ekman's voice trailed off. It was clear that he rather liked Clinton, and that he wanted Clinton's trademark expression to have been no more than a meaningless facial tic. Ekman shrugged. "Unfortunately, I guess, he needed to get caught—and he got caught."

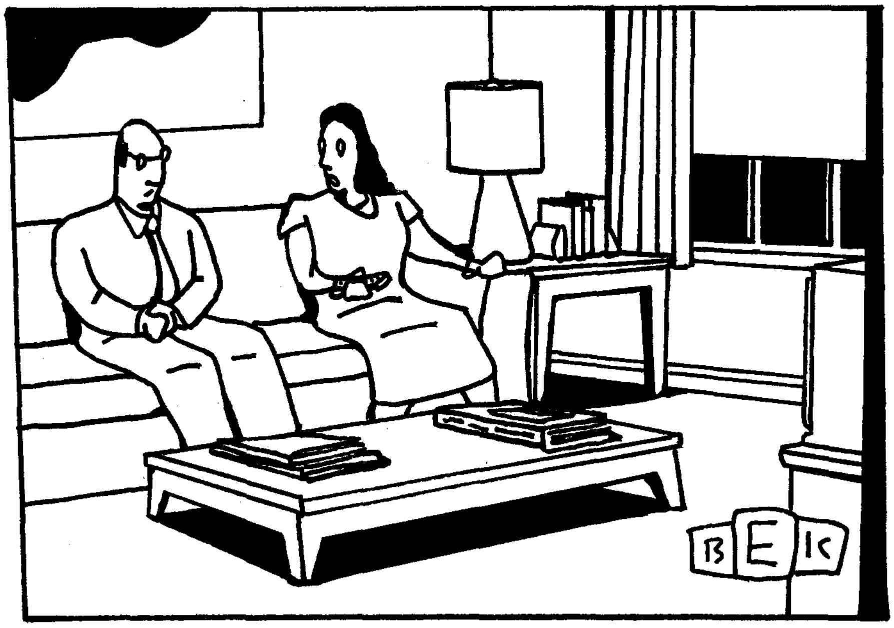
Early in his career, Paul Ekman filmed forty psychiatric patients, including a woman named Mary, a forty-two-year-old housewife. She had attempted suicide three times, and survived the last attempt—an overdose of pills—only because someone found her in time and rushed her to the hospital. Her children had left home and her husband was inattentive, and she was depressed. When she first went to the hospital, she simply sat and cried, but she seemed to respond well to therapy. After three weeks, she told her doctor that she was feeling much better and wanted a weekend pass to see her family. The doctor agreed, but just before Mary was to leave the hospital she confessed that the real reason she wanted to go on weekend leave was so that she could make another suicide attempt. Several years later, a group of young psychiatrists asked Ekman how they could tell when suicidal patients were lying. He didn't know, but, remembering Mary, he decided to try to find out. If the face really was a reliable guide to emotion, shouldn't he be able to look back on the film and tell that she was lying? Ekman and Friesen began to analyze the film for clues. They played it over and over for dozens of hours, examining in slow motion every gesture and expression. Finally, they saw it. As Mary's doctor asked her about her plans for the future, a look of utter despair flashed across her face so quickly that it was almost imperceptible.

Ekman calls that kind of fleeting look a "microexpression," and one cannot understand why John Yarbrough did what he did on that night in South Central without also understanding the particular role and significance of microexpressions. Many facial expressions can be made voluntarily. If I'm trying to look stern as I give you a tongue-lashing, I'll have no difficulty doing so, and you'll have no difficulty interpreting my glare. But our faces are also governed by a separate, involuntary system. We know this because stroke victims who suffer damage to what is known as the pyramidal neural system will laugh at a joke, but they cannot smile if you ask them to. At the same time, patients with damage to another part of the brain have the opposite problem. They can smile on demand, but if you tell them a joke they can't laugh. Similarly, few of us can voluntarily do A.U. one, the sadness sign. (A notable exception, Ekman points out, is Woody Allen, who uses his frontalis, pars medialis, to create his trademark look of comic distress.) Yet we raise our inner eyebrows all the time, without thinking, when we are unhappy. Watch a baby just as he or she starts to cry, and you'll often see the frontalis, pars medialis, shoot up, as if it were on a string.

Perhaps the most famous involuntary expression is what Ekman has dubbed the Duchenne smile, in honor of the nineteenth-century French neurologist Guillaume Duchenne, who first attempted to document the workings of the muscles of the face with the camera. If I ask you to smile, you'll flex your zygomatic major. By contrast, if you smile spontaneously, in the presence of genuine emotion, you'll not only flex your zygomatic but also tighten the orbicularis oculi, pars orbitalis, which is the muscle that encircles the eye. It is almost impossible to tighten the orbicularis oculi, pars lateralis, on demand, and it is equally difficult to stop it from tightening when we smile at something genuinely pleasurable. This kind of smile "does not obey the will," Duchenne wrote. "Its absence unmasks the false friend." When we experience a basic emotion, a corresponding message is automatically sent to the muscles of the face. That message may linger on the face for just a fraction of a second, or be detectable only if you attached electrical sensors to the face, but it's always there. Silvan Tomkins once began a lecture by bellowing, "The face is like the penis!" and this is what he meant—that the face has, to a large extent, a mind of its own. This doesn't mean we have no control over our faces. We can use our voluntary muscular system to try to suppress those involuntary responses. But, often, some little part of that suppressed emotion—the sense that I'm really unhappy, even though I deny it—leaks out. Our voluntary expressive system is the way we intentionally signal our emotions. But our involuntary expressive system is in many ways even more important: it is the way we have been equipped by evolution to signal our authentic feelings.

"You must have had the experience where somebody comments on your expression and you didn't know you were making it," Ekman says. "Somebody tells you, 'What are you getting upset about?' 'Why are you smirking?' You can hear your voice, but you can't see your face. If we knew what was on our face, we would be better at concealing it. But that wouldn't necessarily be a good thing. Imagine if there were a switch that all of us had, to turn off the expressions on our face at will. If babies had that switch, we wouldn't know what they were feeling. They'd be in trouble. You could make an argument, if you wanted to, that the system evolved so that parents would be able to take care of kids. Or imagine if you were married to someone with a switch? It would be impossible. I don't think mating and infatuation and friendships and closeness would occur if our faces didn't work that way."

Ekman slipped a tape taken from the O. J. Simpson trial into the VCR. It was of Kato Kaelin, Simpson's shaggy-haired house guest, being examined by Marcia Clark, one of the prosecutors in the case. Kaelin sits in the witness box, with his trademark vacant look. Clark asks a hostile question. Kaelin leans forward and answers softly. "Did you see that?" Ekman asked me. I saw nothing, just Kato being Kato—harmless and passive. Ekman stopped the tape, rewound it, and played it back in slow motion. On the screen, Kaelin moved forward to answer the question, and in that fraction of a second his face was utterly transformed. His nose wrinkled, as he flexed his levator labii superioris, alaeque nasi. His teeth were bared, his brows lowered. "It was almost totally A.U.



"Do you want to watch someone cook or someone decorate?"

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nine," Ekman said. "It's disgust, with anger there as well, and the clue to that is that when your eyebrows go down, typically your eyes are not as open as they are here. The raised upper eyelid is a component of anger, not disgust. It's very quick." Ekman stopped the tape and played it again, peering at the screen. "You know, he looks like a snarling dog."

Ekman said that there was nothing magical about his ability to pick up an emotion that fleeting. It was simply a matter of practice. "I could show you forty examples, and you could pick it up. I have a training tape, and people love it. They start it, and they can't see any of these expressions. Thirty-five minutes later, they can see them all. What that says is that this is an accessible skill."

Ekman showed another clip, this one from a press conference given by Kim Philby in 1955. Philby had not yet been revealed as a Soviet spy, but two of his colleagues, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, had just defected to the Soviet Union. Philby is wearing a dark suit and a white shirt. His hair is straight and parted to the left. His face has the hauteur of privilege.

"Mr. Philby," he is asked. "Mr. Macmillan, the foreign secretary, said there was no evidence that you were the so-called third man who allegedly tipped off Burgess and Maclean. Are you satisfied with that clearance that he gave you?"

Philby answers confidently, in the plummy tones of the English upper class. "Yes, I am."

"Well, if there was a third man, were you in fact the third man?"

"No," Philby says, just as forcefully. "I was not."

Ekman rewound the tape, and replayed it in slow motion. "Look at this," he said, pointing to the screen. "Twice, after being asked serious questions about whether he's committed treason, he's going to smirk. He looks like the cat who ate the canary." The expression was too brief to see normally. But at quarter speed it was painted on his face—the lips pressed together in a look of pure smugness. "He's enjoying himself, isn't he?" Ekman went on. "I call this 'duping delight'—the thrill you get from fooling other people." Ekman started the VCR up again. "There's another thing he does." On the screen, Philby was answering another question. "In the second place, the Burgess-Maclean affair has raised issues of great"—he pauses—"delicacy." Ekman went back to the pause, and froze the tape. "Here it is," he said. "A very subtle microexpression of distress or unhappiness. It's only in the eyebrows—in fact, just in one eyebrow." Sure enough, Philby's right inner eyebrow was raised in an unmistakable A.U. one. "It's very brief," Ekman said. "He's not doing it voluntarily. And it totally contradicts all his confidence and assertiveness. It comes when he's talking about Burgess and Maclean, whom he had tipped off. It's a hot spot that suggests, 'You shouldn't trust what you hear.' "

A decade ago, Ekman joined forces with J. J. Newberry—the ex-A.T.F. agent who is one of the high-scorers in the Diogenes Project—to put together a program for educating law-enforcement officials around the world in the techniques of interviewing and lie detection. In recent months, they have flown to Washington, D.C., to assist the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. in counter-terrorism training. At the same time, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has asked Ekman and his former student Mark Frank, now at Rutgers, to develop experimental scenarios for studying deception that would be relevant to counter-terrorism. The objective is to teach people to look for discrepancies between what is said and what is signalled—to pick up on the difference between Philby's crisp denials and his fleeting anguish. It's a completely different approach from the shouting cop we see on TV and in the movies, who threatens the suspect and sweeps all of the papers and coffee cups off the battered desk. The Hollywood interrogation is an exercise in intimidation, and its point is to force the suspect to tell you what you need to know. It does not take much to see the limitations of this strategy. It depends for its success on the coöperation of the suspect—when, of course, the suspect's involuntary communication may be just as critical. And it privileges the voice over the face, when the voice and the face are equally significant channels in the same system.

Ekman received his most memorable lesson in this truth when he and Friesen first began working on expressions of anger and distress. "It was weeks before one of us finally admitted feeling terrible after a session where we'd been making one of those faces all day," Friesen says. "Then the other realized that he'd been feeling poorly, too, so we began to keep track." They then went back and began monitoring their body during particular facial movements. "Say you do A.U. one, raising the inner eyebrows, and six, raising the cheeks, and fifteen, the lowering of the corner of the lips," Ekman said, and then did all three. "What we discovered is that that expression alone is sufficient to create marked changes in the autonomic nervous system. When this first occurred, we were stunned. We weren't expecting this at all. And it happened to both of us. We felt *terrible*. What we were generating was sadness, anguish. And when I lower my brows, which is four, and raise the upper eyelid, which is five, and narrow the eyelids, which is seven, and press the lips together, which is twenty-four, I'm generating anger. My heartbeat will go up ten to twelve beats. My hands will get hot. As I do it, I can't disconnect from the system. It's very unpleasant, very unpleasant."

Ekman, Friesen, and another colleague, Robert Levenson, who teaches at Berkeley, published a study of this effect in *Science*. They monitored the bodily indices of anger, sadness, and fear—heart rate and body temperature—in two groups. The first group was instructed to remember and relive a particularly stressful experience. The other was told to simply produce a series of facial movements, as instructed by Ekman—to "assume the position," as they say in acting class. The second group, the people who were pretending, showed the same physiological responses as the first. A few years later, a German team of psychologists published a similar study. They had a group of subjects look at cartoons, either while holding a pen between their lips—an action that made it impossible to contract either of the two major smiling muscles, the risorius and the zygomatic major—or while holding a pen clenched between their teeth, which had the opposite effect and forced them to smile. The people with the pen between their teeth found the cartoons much funnier. Emotion doesn't just go from the inside out. It goes from the outside in. What's more, neither the subjects "assuming the position" nor the people with pens in their teeth knew they were making expressions of emotion. In the facial-feedback system, an expression you do not even know that you have can create an emotion you did not choose to feel.

It is hard to talk to anyone who knows FACS without this point coming up again and again. Face-reading depends not just on seeing facial expressions but also on taking them seriously. One reason most of us—like the TV cop—do not closely attend to the face is that we view its evidence as secondary, as an adjunct to what we believe to be *real* emotion. But there's nothing secondary about the face, and surely this realization is what set John Yarbrough apart on the night that the boy in the sports car came at him with a gun. It's not just that he saw a microexpression that the rest of us would have missed. It's that he took what he saw so seriously that he was able to overcome every self-protective instinct in his body, and hold his fire.

Yarbrough has a friend in the L.A. County Sheriff's Department, Sergeant Bob Harms, who works in narcotics in Palmdale. Harms is a member of the Diogenes Project as well, but the two men come across very differently. Harms is bigger than Yarbrough, taller and broader in the chest, with soft brown eyes and dark, thick hair. Yarbrough is restoring a Corvette and wears Rush Limbaugh ties, and he says that if he hadn't been a cop he would have liked to stay in the Marines. Harms came out of college wanting to be a commercial artist; now he plans to open a bed-and-breakfast in Vermont with his wife when he retires. On the day we met, Harms was wearing a pair of jean shorts and a short-sleeved patterned shirt. His badge was hidden inside his shirt. He takes notes not on a yellow legal pad, which he considers unnecessarily intimidating to witnesses, but on a powder-blue one. "I always get teased because I'm the touchy-feely one," Harms said. "John Yarbrough is very analytical. He thinks before he speaks. There is a lot going on inside his head. He's constantly thinking four or five steps ahead, then formulating whatever his answers are going to be. That's not how I do my interviews. I have a conversation. It's not 'Where were you on Friday night?' Because that's the way we normally communicate. I never say, 'I'm Sergeant Harms.' I always start by saying, 'I'm Bob Harms, and I'm here to talk to you about your case,' and the first thing I do is smile."

The sensation of talking to the two men, however, is surprisingly similar. Normal conversation is like a game of tennis: you talk and I listen, you listen and I talk, and we feel scrutinized by our conversational partner only when the ball is in our court. But Yarbrough and Harms never stop watching, even when they're doing the talking. Yarbrough

"I was afraid it was bursitis, but it's only repetitive stress injury."

would comment on my conversational style, noting where I held my hands as I talked, or how long I would wait out a lull in the conversation. At one point, he stood up and soundlessly moved to the door—which he could have seen only in his peripheral vision—opening it just before a visitor rang the doorbell. Harms gave the impression that he was deeply interested in me. It wasn't empathy. It was a kind of powerful curiosity. "I remember once, when I was in prison custody, I used to shake prisoners' hands," Harms said. "The deputies thought I was crazy. But I wanted to see what happened, because that's what these men are starving for, some dignity and respect."

Some of what sets Yarbrough and Harms and the other face readers apart is no doubt innate. But the fact that people can be taught so easily to recognize microexpressions, and can learn FACS, suggests that we all have at least the potential capacity for this kind of perception. Among those who do very well at face-reading, tellingly, are some aphasics, such as stroke victims who have lost the ability to understand language. Collaborating with Ekman on a paper that was recently published in *Nature*, the psychologist Nancy Etcoff, of Massachusetts General Hospital, described how a group of aphasics trounced a group of undergraduates at M.I.T. on the nurses tape. Robbed of the power to understand speech, the stroke victims had apparently been forced to become far more sensitive to the information written on people's faces. "They are compensating for the loss in one channel through these other channels," Etcoff says. "We could hypothesize that there is some kind of rewiring in the brain, but I don't think we need that explanation. They simply exercise these skills much more than we do." Ekman has also done work showing that some abused children are particularly good at reading faces as well: like the aphasics in the study, they developed "interpretive strategies"—in their case, so they could predict the behavior of their volatile parents.

MARISA ACOCELLA

"He's exactly the kind of man I've always wanted to change."

What appears to be a kind of magical, effortless intuition about faces, then, may not really be effortless and magical at all. This kind of intuition is a product of desire and effort. Silvan Tomkins took a sabbatical from Princeton when his son Mark was born, and stayed in his house on the Jersey Shore, staring into his son's face, long and hard, picking up the patterns of emotion—the cycles of interest, joy, sadness, and anger—that flash across an infant's face in the first few months of life. He taught himself the logic of the furrows and the wrinkles and the creases, the subtle differences between the pre-smile and the pre-cry face. Later, he put together a library of thousands of photographs of human faces, in every conceivable expression. He developed something called the Picture Arrangement Test, which was his version of the Rorschach blot: a patient would look at a series of pictures and be asked to arrange them in a sequence and then tell a story based on what he saw. The psychologist was supposed to interpret the meaning of the story, but Tomkins would watch a videotape of the patient with the sound off, and by studying the expressions on the patient's face teach himself to predict what the story was. Face-reading, for those who have mastered it, becomes a kind of compulsion; it becomes hard to be satisfied with the level and quality of information that most of us glean from normal social encounters. "Whenever we get together," Harms says of spending time with other face readers, "we debrief each other. We're constantly talking about cases, or some of these videotapes of Ekman's, and we say, 'I missed that, did you get that?' Maybe there's an emotion attached there. We're always trying to place things, and replaying interviews in our head."

"So, are you here alone?"

This is surely why the majority of us don't do well at reading faces: we feel no need to make that extra effort. People fail at the nurses tape, Ekman says, because they end up just listening to the words. That's why, when Tomkins was starting out in his quest to understand the face, he always watched television with the sound turned off. "We are such creatures of language that what we hear takes precedence over what is supposed to be our primary channel of communication, the visual channel," he once said. "Even though the visual channel provides such enormous information, the fact is that the voice preëmpts the individual's attention, so that he cannot really see the face while he listens." We prefer that way of dealing with the world because it does not challenge the ordinary boundaries of human relationships. Ekman, in one of his essays, writes of what he learned from the legendary sociologist Erving Goffman. Goffman said that part of what it means to be civilized is not to "steal" information that is not freely given to us. When someone picks his nose or cleans his ears, out of unthinking habit, we look away. Ekman writes that for Goffman the spoken word is "the acknowledged information, the information for which the person who states it is willing to take responsibility," and he goes on:

> When the secretary who is miserable about a fight with her husband the previous night answers, "Just fine," when her boss asks, "How are you this morning?"—that false message may be the one relevant to the boss's interactions with her. It tells him that she is going to do her job. The true message—that she is miserable—he may not care to know about at all as long as she does not intend to let it impair her job performance.

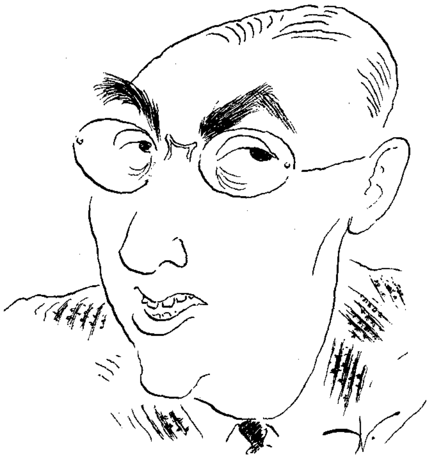
What would the boss gain by reading the subtle and contradictory microexpressions on his secretary's face? It would be an invasion of her privacy and an act of disrespect. More than that, it would entail an obligation. He would be obliged to do something, or say something, or feel something that might otherwise be avoided entirely. To see what is intended to be hidden, or, at least, what is usually missed, opens up a world of uncomfortable possibilities. This is the hard part of being a face reader. People like that have more faith in their hunches than the rest of us do. But faith is not certainty. Sometimes, on a routine traffic stop late at night, you end up finding out that your hunch was right. But at other times you'll never know. And you can't even explain it properly, because what can you say? You did something the rest of us would never have done, based on something the rest of us would never have seen.

"I was working in West Hollywood once, in the nineteen-eighties," Harms said. "I was with a partner, Scott. I was driving. I had just recently come off the prostitution team, and we spotted a man in drag. He was on Sunset, and I didn't recognize him. At that time, Sunset was normally for females. So it was kind of odd. It was a cold night in January. There was an all-night restaurant on Sunset called Ben Franks, so I asked my partner to roll down the window and ask the guy if he was going to Ben Franks—just to get a reaction. And the guy immediately keys on Scott, and he's got an overcoat on, and he's all bundled up, and he starts walking over to the car. It had been raining so much that the sewers in West Hollywood had backed up, and one of the manhole covers had been cordoned off because it was pumping out water. The guy comes over to the squad car, and he's walking right through that. He's fixated on Scott. So we asked him what he was doing. He says, 'I was out for a walk.' And then he says, 'I have something to show you.' "

Later, after the incident was over, Harms and his partner learned that the man had been going around Hollywood making serious threats, that he was unstable and had just attempted suicide, that he was in all likelihood about to erupt. A departmental inquiry into the incident would affirm that Harms and his partner had been in danger: the man was armed with a makeshift flamethrower, and what he had in mind, evidently, was to turn the inside of the squad car into an inferno. But at the time all Harms had was a hunch, a sense from the situation and the man's behavior and what he glimpsed inside the man's coat and on the man's face—something that was the opposite of whatever John Yarbrough saw in the face of the boy in Willowbrook. Harms pulled out his gun and shot the man through the open window. "Scott looked at me and was, like, 'What did you do?' because he didn't perceive any danger," Harms said. "But I did." ♦

CENTENNIAL

BEAU NASH



Ogden Nash hasn't been around for a while, but the need for him remains steady. Readers who counted on him for more than forty years in these pages—this one, at least—still instinctively look for the restorative Nashian couplet or clarifying stanza about today's water-quaffers, navel-piercers, abs-flaunters, and cell-gabblers, not to mention the assertive S.U.V., the forty-room beach cottage, and "could care less." Born a hundred years ago next month, Nash looked and dressed like a bond salesman or an advertising man (he tried both, briefly), but he made his name and a nice living as a serious practitioner of light verse: the best of his time. His critical eye, fastidious modesty, and playful turn of mind seized upon the passing foible or domestic vicissitude, but with more delight than irritation. His verse forms became a bursting conservatory, wildly overgrown but always under control, that could produce, down near the end of each dangling stalk, a cluster of brilliant hybrid rhymes or the exotic, never-seen-before pun. (A taxi-driver in one of his run-on lines turns out to be "an Adam-ant-Evesdropper.") The samples here are plucked from his three hundred and fifty-three verses for the magazine, which brightened some weeks between January 11, 1930, and May 29, 1971.

—*Roger Angell*

LINES TO BE EMBROIDERED ON A BIB
OR, THE CHILD IS FATHER OF THE MAN, BUT NOT FOR QUITE A WHILE

So Thomas Edison
Never drank his medicine;
So Blackstone and Hoyle
Refused cod-liver oil;
So Sir Thomas Malory
Never heard of a calory;
So the Earl of Lennox
Murdered Rizzio without the aid of vitamins
  or calisthenox;
So Socrates and Plato
Ate dessert without finishing their potato;
So spinach was too spinachy
For Leonardo da Vinaci;
Well, it's all immaterial,
So eat your nice cereal,
And if you want to name your own ration,
First go get a reputation.

—*November 22, 1947*

JUST HOW LOW CAN A HIGHBROW GO WHEN A HIGHBROW LOWERS HIS BROW?

Take the intellectual prig;
For his pretensions I do not care a whit or a fig.
I am content that he should know what name Achilles assumed
  among the women, and do his crosswords in Esperanto,
And ostentatiously comprehend the inner meaning of Pound's
  obscurest canto.
It does not disturb me that he can distinguish between "flaunt" and
  "flout," and "costive" and "costate,"
What does disturb me is his black-sheep brother, the intellectual prig
  apostate.
Such a one is so erudite that he frequently thinks in Aramaic,
But he expresses himself in slang long passé in Passaic.
His signature is purple ink in an illegible curlicue,
And he compares baseball to ballet, and laments the passing of
  burlesque, which he refers to as burlicue.
He has a folksy approach to the glory that was Greece,
And professes to find more social and sociological significance in
  "Li'l Abner" than in "War and Peace."
For the most part, my feelings about him I silently conceal,
But when he comments that "The Power of Positive Thinking" burns
  with a hard, gemlike flame, I can only cry that he is robbing
    Pater to paw Peale.

—*August 30, 1958*

MICHAEL WITTE

AUTRES BÊTES, AUTRES MOEURS

I

The fish, when he's exposed to air,
Can show no trace of savoir-faire,
But in the sea regains his balance
And exploits all his many talents.
The chastest of the vertebrates,
He never even sees his mates,
But when they've finished, he appears
And O.K.'s all their bright ideas.

II

The turtle lives twixt plated decks
Which practically conceal its sex.
I think it clever of the turtle
In such a fix to be so fertile.

—November 15, 1930

EPITAPH FOR AN EXPLORER

Tiger! Tiger! my mistake;
I thought that you were William Blake.

—November 20, 1948

WHAT'S SAUCE POUR L'OIE IS SAUCE POUR L'ÉTAT C'EST MOI

I know, *mon Général*, it hurts your pride
To see your cherished language Yankeefied,
Your pure, precise Parisian prunes and prisms
Walk cheek by jowl with Americanisms:
Your earnest students of Racine and Zola
Consuming *le hot dog* and *Coca-Cola*,
Or roaming through *le drugstore* in a quest
For paperbacks depicting *le Far Ouest*.
Although I do not wonder that you fuss,
Have you considered what you've done to us?
Just take a gander at your addenda, pardner,
To the heritage of Shakespeare and Ring Lardner.

Let's to the Opal Room, where for a fee
We're seated ringside by a *mater d'*—
In such crepuscule *ambience* are we meant
To reach a *démarche*, or perhaps *détente*?
A young *chantoose* is facing her *premeer*.
On her dressing-room *chaise lounge* lies her *brazeer*.
Aglow from kneading by a skilled *massoose*,
Her cheek is pink, her *lonjeray chartroose*.
The *gourmet* meal is guaranteed to please,
Concluding with that hybrid treat, *bleu* cheese.

I, too, conclude with this observation cursory:
English makes prettier French than vice versary.

—August 17, 1968

LONG TIME NO SEE, 'BYE NOW

Let us all point an accusing finger at Mr. Latour.
Mr. Latour is an illiterate boor.
He watches horse racing, instead of the sport of kings, when at the track,
And to him first base is simply first base, instead of the initial sack.
He eats alligator pear, instead of avocado;
He says fan, or enthusiast, instead of aficionado.
He has none of the feeling for words that Ouida and Spinoza felt.
Instead of Eleanor, he says Mrs. Roosevelt.
Sometimes he speaks even more bluntly and rashly,
And says the former Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks Senior, instead of Sylvia,
  Lady Ashley.
He drinks his drinks in a saloon, instead of a tavern or grill,
And pronounces "know-how" "skill."
He calls poor people poor, instead of underprivileged,
Claiming that the English language is becoming overdrivileged.
He says the English language ought to get out of the nursery and leave the
  toys room,
So he goes to the bathroom, instead of the little boys' room.
I will offer the hand of my daughter and half my income tax to he who
  will bring me the head of Mr. Latour on a saucer
Before he has everybody else talking as illiterate as Defoe and Chaucer.

—September 10, 1949

PROFILES

MAN OF STEEL

Richard Serra remains unyielding—and his art is still overpowering.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

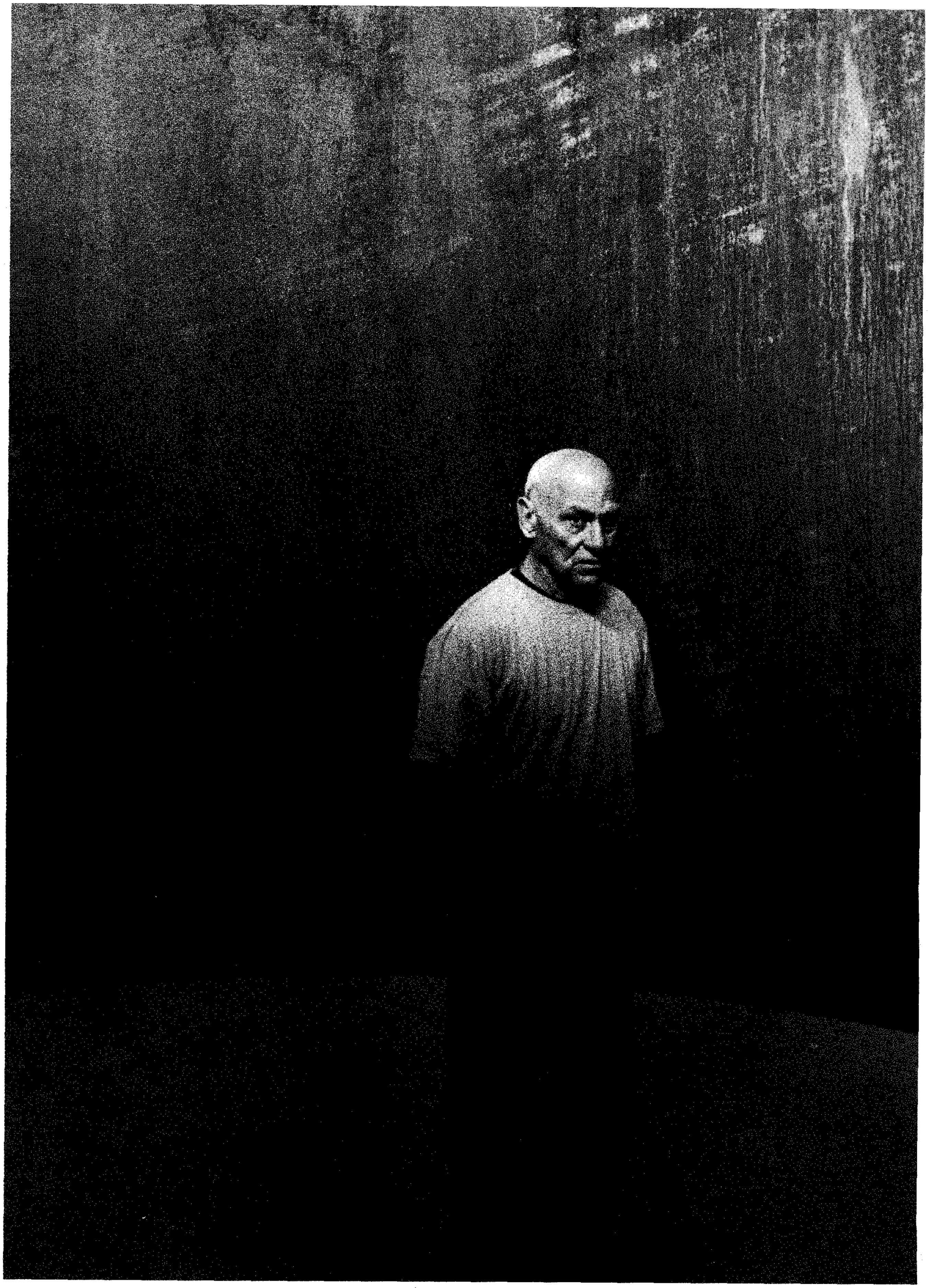
In the long and often embattled career of Richard Serra, no event has been more cathartic than his most recent New York exhibition, which opened last October at the Gagosian Gallery on West Twenty-fourth Street. The opening had been delayed by the terrible events of September 11th, and in the aftermath of the catastrophe there was no telling how many people would show up. More than three thousand did, as it turned out, and, according to Ealan Wingate, the gallery's director, "Everybody was bathed in antidote." Six monumental Serra sculptures filled the exhibition space. The scale and ambition of his new work was no surprise; Serra's sculptures have been overpowering viewers since the late nineteen-sixties, when he showed his early propped-lead pieces at the Guggenheim and Whitney Museums. What amazed me and many others was how far Serra, at the age of sixty-two, had moved beyond the breakout innovations of his most recent show, two years earlier. Once again, it seemed, he was carrying the art of sculpture into new areas, taking great risks and pulling them off, and there was something thrilling and deeply reassuring about that.

All six sculptures at Gagosian were enormous: leaning walls of two-inch-thick industrial steel plate; two forty-ton rectangular solids that devoured the space of two rooms; a strange, exquisitely calibrated monolith that looked like a great ship listing dangerously to one side. There were also two "torqued spirals," coiling thirteen-foot-high steel enclosures that you could walk into. Shown for the first time last summer at the Venice Biennale, the spirals offer viewers a spatial experience that is simultaneously disorienting and exhilarating. Because the encircling walls are never plumb (they either bend in or bend out from the vertical at all points), you have alternating sensations of confinement and expansion as you walk into them. The weight of Corten steel on either side makes the walk fairly frightening, but then, emerging at last into the open space at the center, you get a jolt of euphoria, space rushing away from you on all sides and the whole vast form becoming buoyant and seemingly weightless. Serra has said that the subject of his sculpture is the viewer's experience in walking through or around it—that what he is doing is not creating static objects but shaping space. Never before, however, has his sculpture played so directly and unequivocally with the spectator's emotions. People wandered through the spirals at Gagosian with rapt looks. They reached out to touch the walls, whose patina of rich brownish-red rust invited contact. Some sat down inside and stayed for a while; others came back again and again during the three months that the show was up. One young couple got permission to be married in "Bellamy," the spiral that Serra had named after the late Richard Bellamy, his close friend and early dealer. (The other one was called "Sylvester," after the British art historian David Sylvester, who died a few months before the show opened.) For the first time in my experience, I found myself responding to Serra's work with intense sensations of joy and delight.

Long inured to negative or even hostile reactions to his work, Serra seemed indifferent to the virtually unanimous praise this time. "Whatever the work is evoking in people, I don't dictate that," he told me, "so I don't know how to account for it." His attention, in any case, was focussed mainly on the unprecedented number of new sculptural commissions or proposals that he had in various stages of development. There was an eight-hundred-and-sixty-five-foot-long serpentine wall of steel plates being set into the landscape of a private client in New Zealand—the longest continuous sculpture he had yet conceived. There were major projects for the Toronto airport, for the Kimbell Art Museum, in Fort Worth, for Caltech and U.C.L.A. and M.I.T., and for public or private sponsors in Germany, Italy, England, Belgium, and Qatar. Busy as he was, Serra nevertheless agreed to play a leading role in "Cremaster 3," the latest in a much acclaimed cycle of films by the young artist Matthew Barney, whose work he likes a lot. His role is that of the Great Architect, who (symbolism ahoy!) gets murdered by the Apprentice.

Early in December, Serra and Clara, his German-born wife, retreated to their house on Cape Breton Island, where they spend about five months a year. Serra does much of the planning for his sculptures up there, and he also makes a great many drawings, which have no connection to his sculpture but which are an important part of his œuvre. When I went to see him at his Tribeca loft in February, the day after he got back from Cape Breton, he immediately took me downstairs to the ground-floor studio to see the new drawings: twenty-seven large-scale abstract variations, in thickly impastoed black oil stick, on the circular motif that has occupied him for several years. Serra was hyperkinetic, and dauntingly articulate. A stocky, powerful-looking man with a large head, a fringe of close-cropped gray hair, and black eyes whose intense stare reminds you of Picasso's, he wore his usual outfit of jeans, work boots, and a hooded sweatshirt. He moved quickly from one drawing to the next, explaining, in answer to my question, how he puts handmade paper face down on top of compacted oil stick and then draws through the back of it with a piece of metal, forcing the line into the thick black pigment. A real Serra process, I thought: physical, aggressive, laborious. And yet the drawings themselves were complex and sensuously, almost lusciously beautiful.

We went back upstairs to the sixth floor, which the Serras share with their



Long inured to negative reactions to his work, Serra seemed indifferent to the praise for his last show. Photograph by Robert Frank.

three boisterous Chesapeake retrievers. The living room is about forty feet long by thirty feet wide: high ceilings, two large skylights, Mission chairs and tables, African wood sculptures, ancient Cambodian earthenware pots on a high shelf, a fireplace with stacked wood covering the wall on one side, and, on the other side, a single, very large Serra drawing in black oil stick. We talked about Serra's recent appearance on the Charlie Rose show, during which some viewers thought he spoke disparagingly about the architect Frank Gehry. Serra didn't agree that he had spoken disparagingly. Charlie Rose (like Matthew Barney) "was trying to make me an architect," he said, "and to make Frank Gehry an artist. The guy said to me, 'What do you think you have to do better than an architect, if you're a sculptor?' And I said that, for one thing, you've got to draw better. He asked me if I thought I drew better than Gehry, and I said, 'Sure I draw better. Absolutely.' What's wrong with saying that?"

Charlie Rose had hit one of Serra's hot buttons. Gehry is not among the architects with whom Serra has clashed publicly over the years—in fact, the two men are close friends who have been "talking to each other through our work," as Gehry puts it, for a long time. But Gehry's new Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is the most acclaimed building of our era, it has been referred to again and again as a major work of art and Gehry himself as a major artist, and this does not sit well with Richard Serra. "If you analyze what I said," he insisted, "I didn't take a public slap at Frank. I said that art is purposely useless, that its significations are symbolic, internal, poetic—a host of other things—whereas architects have to answer to the program, the client, and everything that goes along with the utility function of the building. Let's not confuse the two things. Now we have architects running around saying, 'I'm an artist,' and I just don't buy it. I don't believe Frank is an artist. I don't believe Rem Koolhaas is an artist. Sure, there are comparable overlaps in the language between sculpture and architecture, between painting and architecture. There are overlaps between all kinds of human activities. But there are also differences that have gone on for centuries. Architects are higher in the pecking order than sculptors, we all know that, but they can't have it both ways."

I told him I'd recently talked with Gehry about this. Gehry's view was that an architect solves the client's problems, solves the building department's requirements and all the other issues, but that "there's something that takes it from just a building to architecture, maybe fifteen per cent of the effort, and that's where our decisions are similar." Gehry had added, "I'm dealing with context, form, surface—all the things Richard is dealing with."

"Did Frank give you the fifteen-percent line?" Serra said now, his voice rising. "O.K., I've got it. I'm building a functional building for a client, which happens to be a shoe store, but fifteen per cent of it is where the art is. He wants to claim art as part of his process? Come on. He doesn't need that, and we don't need it!" What sounded like animosity was something different—passionate intensity. "I think you have to take Richard as Richard," Gehry had told me. "He's sometimes angry, he's jealous, he's critical, impatient, a perfectionist, demanding, difficult. But the people who love him say, 'Oh, well, that's Richard.' I remember an incident soon after I first met him, in 1978, when he was staying at Stanley Grinstein's house in Los Angeles. He'd left one of his drawing books open on the kitchen counter, and Berta, my wife, innocently looked into it, and Richard came in and told her she shouldn't do that, said it so stingingly he made her cry. That was the first time I understood you've got to be careful, this one bites. When he gets like that, there's no arguing with him."

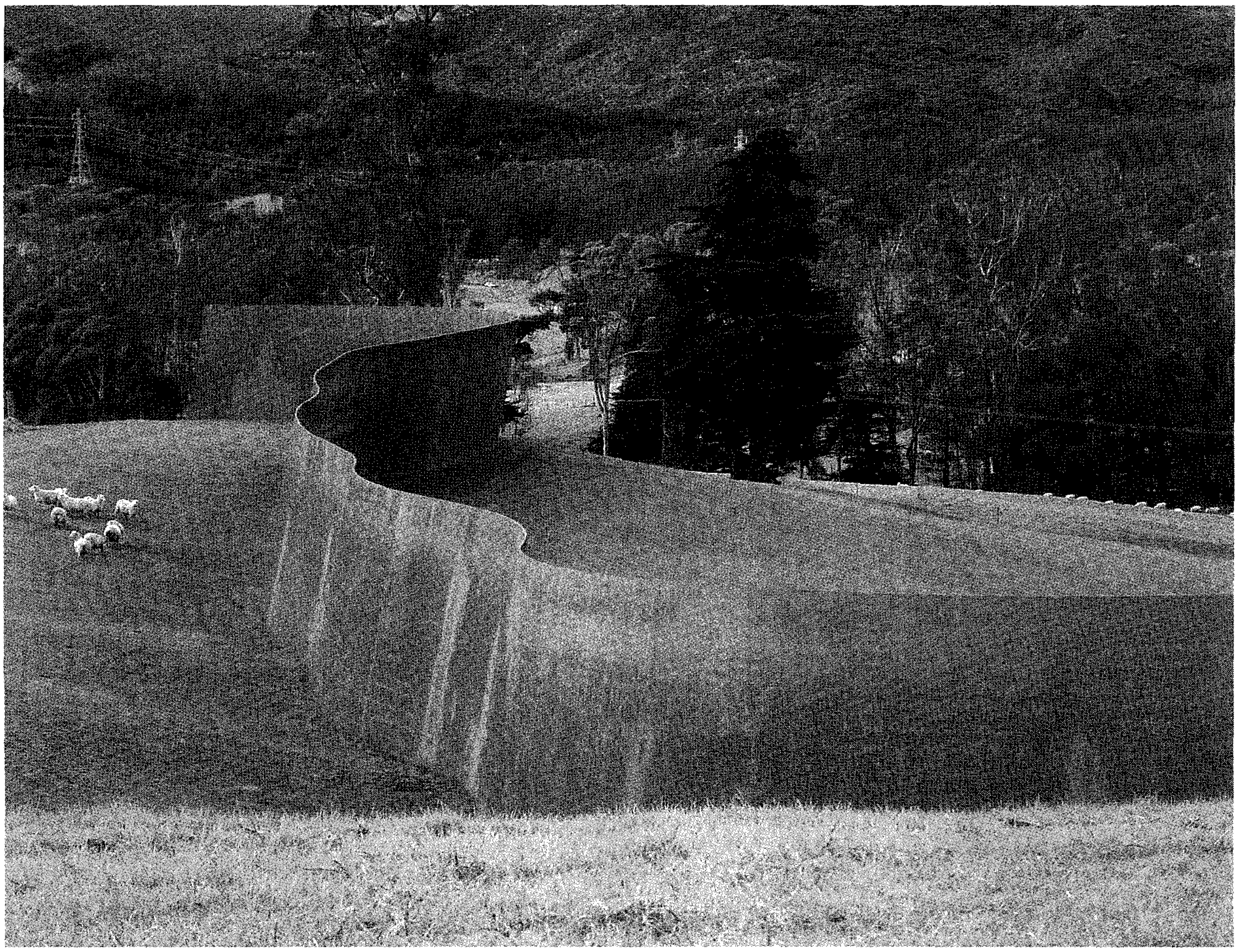
Even so, Serra and Gehry have spent a lot of time together during the past thirty years, and learned a lot from each other. Gehry "is one of the few architects of this century who has brought the procedures and thought processes of contemporary art into the world of architecture," Serra said recently. Gehry has consistently praised Serra's work and has tried to arrange commissions for Serra sculptures to be sited in or adjacent to his buildings. Their only real falling-out occurred in the late nineteen-seventies, and it was over a Serra sculpture that Gehry had persuaded Marcia Weisman, a Los Angeles collector, to commission for the garden of her house in Beverly Hills. As the steel sculpture was being lowered on its crane, Weisman got into a violent argument with Serra about its orientation, and then, half an hour later, she told him she wanted to have an opening party at which a bottle of champagne would be broken against its side. Serra said it wasn't a ship, and he wouldn't put up with that. Angry words ensued, Weisman threatened to have the sculpture removed, and Serra stormed out. Gehry, who was also present, called Serra that evening and advised him to send her a dozen roses and say he'd like to come over and talk about it. "Two hours later," according to Gehry, "a box of two dozen roses comes to me, with a note from Richard saying, 'Shove 'em up your ass.' And then he didn't speak to me for two years."

"What roses?" Serra barked, when I relayed Gehry's story to him. "Did I do that? I may have done that, and I can tell you why. Because where does Frank Gehry get off calling me up and telling me to placate Marcia, after she's just offed one of my pieces? Get serious." Marcia Weisman did have the sculpture removed. It has been sold twice since then, most recently to a gallery for $1.2 million.

Getting along with Serra has never been easy. His father used to try to discipline him by having him move large sand piles from one part of the back yard to another. "After I'd spent all day shovelling, he'd come home and say, 'O.K., tomorrow I want it over there,' " Serra remembers. His father was Spanish, from Majorca. He had immigrated to America and married a Russian Jewish girl, and they had settled in San Francisco, where Richard Serra was born, in 1939. His father worked during the Second World War as a pipe fitter in a shipyard, and after the war as the foreman at a candy factory. Serra and his two brothers (one older, one younger) grew up in a house on the sand dunes between the zoo and the Cliff House. The family next door was named di Suvero; their oldest son, Mark, would also become a world-famous sculptor. The two of them didn't spend much time together, because Mark was the same age as Serra's older brother, Tony, whose long shadow Richard struggled to get out from under. A brilliant student and a gifted athlete, Tony Serra became the most celebrated defense lawyer in San Francisco. (James Woods played him in the film "True Believer," which was about one of his cases.) Serra thinks he got interested in drawing as a kid because it was one thing his older brother couldn't do. Both parents encouraged his drawing, and he drew every night, on sheets of butcher paper—airplanes, cars, baseball players, boats, himself in the mirror. "I always felt I could do that and would do it," he told me, "but when I went to college I decided to major in English."

In 1957, he entered the University of California at Berkeley, but transferred in his sophomore year to U.C. Santa Barbara, because "I'd broken my back playing football at Berkeley, and I wanted to go to a place where I could major in English and surf. I was a relatively good surfer." Every summer, he worked in a steel mill. "I started doing that when I was fifteen, rolling ball bearings in a little plant where I lied about my age. It was very useful. It's probably why I do what I do. I respect the working class. If you're making art, you don't know what class you're in, but if you work in a steel mill you're part of the working class." At Santa Barbara, he took a lot of art courses, but he still planned to go on to Stanford for graduate work in English. His faculty adviser suggested, however, that he think about applying to Yale's School of Art, which was recruiting gifted art students from all over the country. Serra sent Yale twelve of his drawings, Yale wrote back offering a scholarship, and the chance to get that far away from Tony's shadow proved irresistible.

Serra's three years at Yale, from 1961 to 1964, could not have been better timed. Josef Albers, the former Bauhaus teacher and artist, had retired three years earlier as head of the art school, but his program continued to attract the most talented and ambitious art students, many of whom would go on to become well-known artists. "The great thing about Yale was the student body," Chuck Close, who was in Serra's class, said. (Other classmates included Brice Marden, Nancy Graves, Rackstraw Downes, and Stephen Posen; Robert Mangold was one year ahead of them; Jonathan Borofsky and Jennifer Bartlett were a year behind.) "There were thirty-five or forty kids," Close said, "each with a different attitude and different gods. We asked more of each other than the faculty asked of us, but we knew we were students. There was no confusion about that, no thinking you could take your graduate work to New York and hope to get a show." The Yale faculty was augmented by visiting artists from New York: Ad Reinhardt, Jack Tworkov (who would become the dean there in 1963), Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, and


Serra's "Tuhirangi Contour," at The Farm, in Kaukapakapa, New Zealand, the longest continuous sculpture he has yet conceived.

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other stars, whose visits often generated loud arguments among the students. Abstract Expressionism still reigned supreme at the school. Serra, who thought of himself as a painter then, was churning out what he calls "bad de Koonings," but he was also absorbing art history at a frenzied pace. "You could always tell who Richard had been studying when you'd go to the library and find a book all stuck together with paint," Close said. "He distinguished himself by his intensity. He took things more personally than anybody else. Huge fights, smashing of chairs, throwing of loaded brushes. When he thought you were wrong, you were an idiot—but he'd always come around the next day to see how you were doing. There was something supportive about his negativism." For Close, who became an important painter, staying friends with Serra was worth the effort, but not always possible.

In 1964, armed with an M.F.A. degree and a Yale travel grant, Serra headed for Paris. He shared an apartment off the Boulevard Raspail with Nancy Graves, his Yale girlfriend, who was there on a Fulbright; their Swiss landlady threatened to throw them out when she discovered they weren't married, so they got married. Graves had met the future composer Philip Glass on the boat coming over, and Glass and Serra became good friends. "Phil took me to see Buster Keaton films, which I'd never seen before, and I took him to Brancusi's studio," Serra remembers. Serra spent a lot of time sketching in Brancusi's studio, which had been re-created in the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. "It was the first time I looked at sculpture seriously," he said. "I really responded to the strength and simplicity and abstraction of the work. I just found myself being drawn back to that studio every day." In the evenings, he and Glass would go to La Coupole and stare at Giacometti. "I'd written a thesis on existentialism at Santa Barbara," Serra said, "and I was just starstruck. One night, he must have noticed us staring, because he said something. I asked if we could come by his studio the next day, and he said yes, come at such-and-such a time. We did, and nobody was there."

"There's old Fuchburg's harrumph. Right on time."

After a year in Paris, Serra got a Fulbright of his own, and he and Nancy Graves spent the next year in Florence. They also travelled—Greece, Turkey, Spain. Serra's first exposure to Velázquez, at the Prado, was a life-changer. "I'd come out of Yale as a painter," he said, "but I didn't quite know how to move painting on. When I saw 'Las Meninas,' I thought there was no possibility of me getting close to that—the viewer in relation to space, the painter included in the painting, the masterliness with which he could go from an abstract passage to a figure or a dog. It pretty much stopped me. Cézanne hadn't stopped me, de Kooning and Pollock hadn't stopped me, but Velázquez seemed like a bigger thing to deal with. That sort of nailed the coffin on painting for me. When I got back to Florence, I took everything I had and dumped it in the Arno. I thought I'd better start from scratch, so I started screwing around with sticks and stones and wire and cages and live and stuffed animals." An Italian dealer saw some of his stacked cages with objects inside, and gave Serra a show of them at his gallery in Rome. It was like a premonition of Arte Povera, a European movement keyed to the use of non-art materials, which would surface a year or so later. "That was in the air," said Serra, "but I didn't know it was in the air."

New York, when Serra and Graves moved back, in 1966, made Paris and Florence seem like artistic backwaters. Pop art had broken the hegemony of Abstract Expressionism; its bumptious, mass-cult images were attracting a whole new audience to an art that seemed immediately comprehensible and highly entertaining. Minimalism, the austere and impersonal aesthetic laid down by Frank Stella's stripe paintings, Donald Judd's machined metal boxes, Carl Andre's rows of bricks or steel plates, and other strategies that dispensed with composition, metaphor, and any hint of self-expression, was looking stronger and stronger, its lack of popular appeal offset by its ability to generate dense thickets of critical analysis. Within a few weeks of his arrival, Serra had plunged into the downtown art scene and caught minimalism's second wave, becoming one of a group of young artists (the others included Robert Smithson, Bruce Nauman, Michael Heizer, and Eva Hesse) who were roughening up the movement's smooth surface with weird materials and a distinctly personal touch. They met almost every night in the back room at Max's Kansas City, the downtown restaurant and bar that Mickey Ruskin, its owner, had turned into an artists' hangout. (Andy Warhol and his entourage held down the big table in the corner, under a neon-light sculpture by Dan Flavin.) It was like Yale again—impassioned arguments and violent disagreements, plus a lot more drinking. "I remember him filling the room with energy, and being impulsive and competitive," recalls Nancy Holt, an artist who was married to Bob Smithson. "He was always trying to provoke you and get responses. Bob was somebody he had to take on, challenge." Serra and Smithson were two heavyweight intellects, testing themselves against each other; their abrasive friendship was important to them both. Serra smoked a lot of marijuana in those days. He could be a bully, and a real pain in the ass sometimes, but the others respected his ambition and commitment. "Richard comes across as this macho bulldog, and he is that, but he isn't just that, and the other part is just as strong," Elizabeth Murray, another artist of that generation, told me. "I don't know anybody who goes into things as deeply as Richard does."

Serra had started working with scrap rubber, which he picked up from a nearby warehouse that was throwing it out; he folded it, hung it, and combined it with neon-light tubes in random assemblages. Richard Bellamy, a young dealer with a great eye but not much business acumen, liked the work and put it in a group show at the Noah Goldowsky Gallery. (Bellamy had shown Rosenquist, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, and other emerging stars of the previous generation at his Green Gallery in the early sixties; when the Green went broke, many of his artists gravitated to Leo Castelli.) Nobody in Serra's group wanted to do anything that had been done before. Most of them were involved with the idea of process; like a lot of others on the downtown art scene then—dancers, filmmakers, performance artists, musicians—they believed that the process of making something was more interesting and more important than the result. There was a lot of cross-influence between disciplines. Serra and his friends went to the performances at the Judson Dance Theater, whose young innovators (Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton) were experimenting with ordinary, non-dance movement and chance procedures in much the same way that the artists were using latex rubber, rocks and dirt, and random placement. (Although Serra had no interest in performing, he was and is an excellent dancer; on the day Elvis Presley died, he and Helen Tworkov, Jack Tworkov's daughter, danced for three hours to Presley songs.) Serra's faltering marriage to Nancy Graves came apart when he fell in love with a performance and video artist named Joan Jonas. Graves had hit her own artistic stride by then, with a highly acclaimed show at the Graham Gallery of realistic life-size sculptures of camels.

Process art had political overtones. By getting rid of the pedestal ("the biggest move of the century," according to Serra) and using cheap, easily available materials like scrap metal and fabric, sculptors were rejecting hierarchy and authority and received wisdom of all kinds. Serra, the former English major, wrote down a list of verbs: "to roll, to crease, to fold, to bend, to twist"—dozens of active verbs. "I was very involved with the physical activity of making," he said. "It struck me that instead of thinking about what a sculpture is going to be and how you're going to do it compositionally, what if you just enacted those verbs in relation to a material, and didn't worry about the result? So I started tearing and cutting and folding lead." He had been introduced to lead by Philip Glass, who was working part time as a plumber. (Serra supported himself then with local moving jobs; he had a truck, and several friends willing to man it two days a week, which earned them enough money to spend the rest of the week doing their own work.) Lead was almost as malleable as rubber, but it had weight and solidity. He tried propping heavy lead plates against the wall in various ways, often with sheets of rolled lead. Serra and Glass, who was helping him, did more than thirty propped-lead pieces. "Some of them didn't amount to anything," Serra said, "but others did." He also tried splashing molten lead against the wall, which was dangerous but exciting; the splashed lead, when it dried, came away in beautiful, lacy, V-shaped strips. Serra had a splashed-lead piece, a lead-prop, and a rubber scatter piece in a group show at Leo Castelli's uptown warehouse gallery in December of 1968. The show included work by most of the process-oriented artists, and announced a major shift in the development of minimalism. "The New Avant-Garde," an influential 1972 book by Grégoire Müller, with photographs by Gianfranco Gorgoni, had a dramatic shot on the cover of Serra in a welder's mask, flinging molten lead from a ladle—he looked like a working-class Poseidon.

The Castelli warehouse show got a lot of attention, and it led directly to exhibitions of Serra's work in a number of important group shows here and in Europe. Soon enough, he had a team of people helping him. Philip Glass had quit his plumbing job to become Serra's paid studio assistant. The painter Chuck Close, Serra's Yale classmate, the musician Steve Reich, the writer Rudy Wurlitzer, the actor Spalding Gray, and two or three others could be counted on to help assemble and install the heavier pieces, such as "One-Ton Prop (House of Cards)"—a freestanding sculpture made of four-foot-square lead plates, upright and balanced at the top corners. "He was smart enough never to have a sculptor as an assistant," Close commented. "One Friday night, we put up a bunch of the lead-prop pieces for the show at the Castelli warehouse. At that point, he hadn't started mixing antimony into the lead to make it stiffer. The ware-

"Is everything O.K., sir?"

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house was closed for the weekend, and the pieces all came down." Luckily, no one was around to get hurt. "I don't think Richard meant danger to be an element, although they were very dangerous," Glass told me. Serra insists that the possibility of collapse was never part of his aesthetic. "I wasn't interested in that at all," he told me. "I wanted them to reveal the principle that they were interdependent and self-supporting, and not bolted or welded." He started adding antimony to the lead after a three-piece lead-prop collapsed in St. Louis, taking out the back wall of Joe Helman's house. Helman, a collector who became a dealer, kept right on buying and selling Serra's work for years afterward.

Serra resisted the idea of working with steel. "Steel was such a traditional material I wasn't going near it," he said. "Picasso, González, Calder had all done great things with steel. But then I thought, Well, I can use steel in the way industry uses it—for weight, load bearing, stasis, friction, counterbalance. I knew something about steel, so why not?" In 1970, he wedged a big slab of hot-rolled steel into the corner of a room, so that it was held up by the corner itself. The idea had come to him the year before, when he was making a splashed-lead piece that Jasper Johns had commissioned. Johns, whose influence on Serra's generation was as immense as Pollock's, had wanted to buy the splashed-lead Serra he had seen in a 1969 group show at the Whitney Museum; because that one was not available, Serra agreed to make another in Johns's studio on Houston Street. He put a small, freestanding lead plate in the corner there, to splash against, and this made him realize that a corner could be a structural support. "Strike," the steel corner piece he finished in 1971, was twenty-four feet long by eight feet high, and Serra had to hire industrial riggers to set it up. "That's when I left the whole studio idea behind," he said. "It was a real sea change for me. I began to think about declaring or dividing the space of a room, and about the spectator walking through and around a piece in time, rather than just looking at an object. The spectator became part of the piece at that point—not before. After 'Strike,' my studio really became the steel mills."

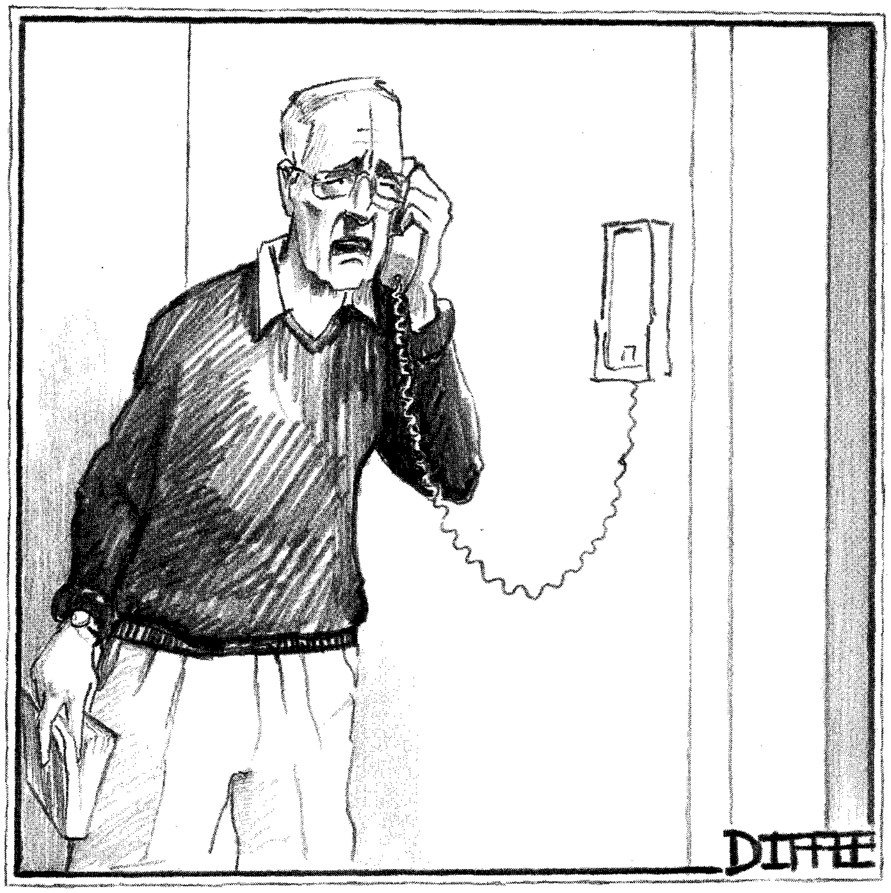
A lot happened in the next two years. He and Joan Jonas went to Japan, where they spent five weeks visiting Buddhist temples and gardens and going to performances of Noh and Kabuki plays at night. The gardens gave him "a new sense of how to control space in relation to time," as he put it. Back home, he went to see Michael Heizer's "Double Negative," a pioneer work of land art made by bulldozing two deep cuts in a Nevada mesa. Serra had helped Bob Smithson, his closest friend and archrival, to stake out "Spiral Jetty," a winding archipelago of rocks, dirt, and crystals at the northern end of the Great Salt Lake, in Utah. Although Serra would not become an earth artist like Smithson and Heizer, shaping the landscape in remote areas, he was impressed by the scale and the evocative power of both these projects, and they were certainly in his mind when he accepted his first major commission, from the publisher and art collector Joseph Pulitzer, for a piece on the grounds of Joe and Emily Pulitzer's country house outside St. Louis. "I was very anxious about the Pulitzer piece," Serra said. "The house there had one of Monet's 'Water Lilies' paintings, and a beautiful Ellsworth Kelly sculpture, a Matisse sculpture, a Brancusi, and paintings by Rothko and Cézanne, all at a very high level, and you don't want to go there and make a fool of yourself." It took him more than a year to finish it. Serra's anxieties nearly undid him a couple of times. At a dinner party at Joe Helman's house in St. Louis, he flew into a drunken rage and attacked everyone at the table, including Joe Pulitzer, a man whose personality, life style, and politics he greatly admired. (Pulitzer's St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* was one of the first newspapers to come out against the Vietnam War.) Helman and others remember the evening as a total disaster, but everyone got over it, as people did with Serra, and the piece got finished—three sixty-foot-long Corten-steel plates set into a field at precisely calibrated angles, which made the landscape into a work of sculpture embracing space, time, and the walking viewer.

Fierce struggles against obstacles that were partly self-imposed: this seemed to be the pattern of Serra's career. Commissioned to do an outdoor sculpture for a new building at Wesleyan University, he designed a forty-foot tower of overlapping steel plates—it came right out of "House of Cards"—which was rejected, because the university's architect said it was too tall. (Four years later, the piece was installed on the grounds of the Stedelijk Museum, in Amsterdam.) A Serra proposal for the exterior of the Centre Pompidou, in Paris, also got turned down, because Renzo Piano, one of the building's architects, considered it intrusive. Serra talked himself out of what would have been the biggest sculptural commission of the decade, for the Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment Corporation, in Washington, D.C. He clashed repeatedly with Robert Venturi, the architect in charge. When Serra was shown a watercolor rendering of two pylons designed by Venturi with stars and stripes on them, he said there might just as well be a swastika and an eagle on top; he was fired soon afterward.

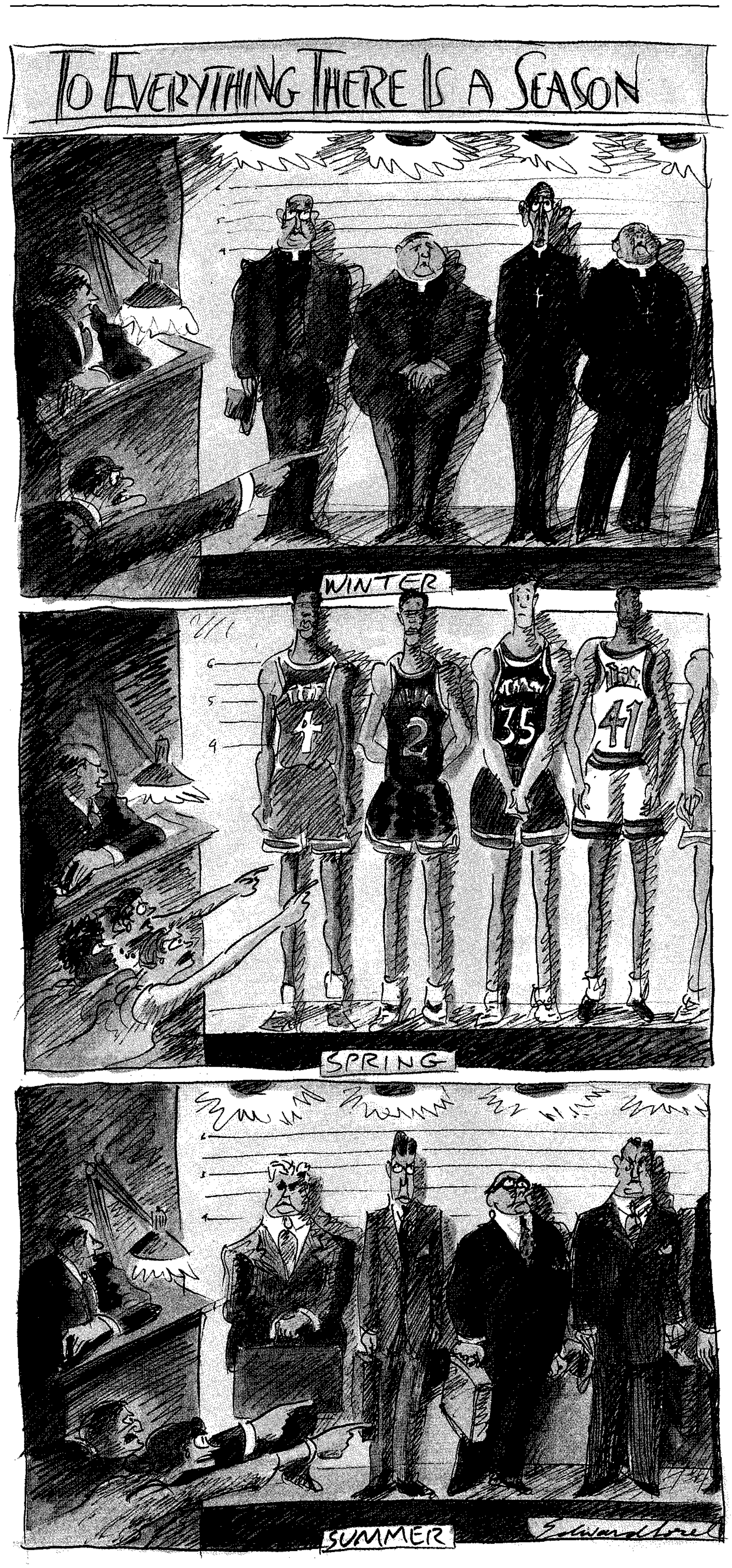
In 1971, a two-part prop sculpture by Serra fell while it was being taken down at the Walker Art Center, in Minneapolis, pinning a workman underneath. The workman died on the way to the hospital. At the trial that followed, responsibility for the accident was assigned to the fabricator, for not following the design specifications, and to the rigging crew, which had ignored the engineer's written instructions, because the foreman couldn't read. Industrial accidents happen all the time, of course. Nobody had blamed Alexander Calder when a piece fell off a sculpture of his that was being installed at Princeton in 1970, killing two workmen, but Serra's reputation for arrogant and aggressive behavior led a number of people to condemn him over the incident. "I was harassed, ridiculed, disgraced, and was told by friends, other artists, museum directors, critics, and dealers to stop working," he said. Serra was devastated by the tragedy and its aftermath. "It sent me into analysis for eight years," he said, "and it put me on the road. I went to Europe and started building there."

For a man who was often his own worst enemy, he could inspire and reciprocate deep loyalty. When Bob Smithson died in a small-plane crash, in 1973, at the age of thirty-four, Serra went out to Texas and helped Nancy Holt finish "Amarillo Ramp," the piece Smithson had been working on at the time. He did a lot to further the careers of Philip Glass and the filmmaker Michael Snow, arranging concerts and screenings for them in Europe; it was Glass, in turn, who introduced Serra to Cape Breton Island, where they both have been going since the early seventies. ("What I really like about Nova Scotia is the light," Serra says. "Northern light is like light after it rains. I don't like fat, lazy, Mediterranean light.") Serra was deeply grateful to Leo Castelli, who became his dealer in 1969, stood by him after the Minneapolis accident, and kept giving him annual shows even though he had trouble selling his work, but the person he says he owes the most to is Alexander von Berswordt-Wallrabe, his German dealer, with whom he has worked since 1975. Von Berswordt's connections gave Serra high-level access to German steel mills (his father-in-law was a director of Krupp), and his tireless advocacy led to many commissions. It was at von Berswordt's gallery in Bochum, moreover, that Serra met Clara Weyergraf, a German art historian and Mondrian scholar, with whom he began living in 1977 and whom he married in 1981. Serra's mother had committed suicide a month before he met Clara, and Serra thinks this had a lot to do with his finally managing to form a stable relationship. "When your mother commits suicide, it pretty much changes your relation to women," he said. "Before, I don't think I could have been as open or as vulnerable." Serra also told me that his mother's suicide, which nobody in the family could explain, had "pretty much conflicted the relationships" between him and his two brothers. He occasionally sees his younger brother, Rudy, an artist who teaches sculpture at Rutgers, but for the past twenty-five years he has had virtually no contact with Tony, in San Francisco.

Although he would continue to set sculptures into natural landscapes, as he had done with the Pulitzer piece, Serra preferred to work in urban settings. His ideal site was a place with a "density of traffic flow," like the traffic island facing the train station in Bochum, where, in 1977, he and von Berswordt managed to install a vertical steel-plate piece called "Terminal." In the early eighties, he was offered three such sites in downtown Manhattan. It was a terrific opportunity



"I'm sorry—you have the wrong language."



EDWARD SOREL

to triumph on his own turf, and to demonstrate the contempt he felt for artists like Noguchi and Calder, whose public sculptures failed, in his view, because they had nothing to do with the contexts in which they were placed. ("At best," Serra said, "they are studio-made and site-adjusted. They are displaced, homeless, overblown objects that say, 'We represent modern art.' ") The Castelli Gallery sponsored and paid for "St. John's Rotary Arc," a two-hundred-foot-long, gently curving twelve-foot-high steel wall in an unused open space at the exit from the Holland Tunnel. Visible mainly from above and by people in cars, it caused no controversy and was generally considered a great success. "TWU," the second piece (the initials refer to the Transport Workers Union), was financed by von Berswordt's Galerie M; it took the form of three tall steel plates (thirty-six feet high) set vertically on a narrow triangle at the intersection of West Broadway, Leonard Street, and Franklin Street, an area where many artists lived and worked, and, judging from the tone of the graffiti that regularly defaced it ("Kill Serra," for example), local admiration was decidedly mixed. The third of these New York commissions was "Tilted Arc," which became the most controversial art work of the nineteen-eighties—a sculpture whose fame stemmed from the battle over its removal.

"Tilted Arc" was commissioned by the General Services Administration of the federal government, under a program that allotted one-half of one per cent of a government building's construction budget to a work or works of art. The G.S.A. reviewed and approved Serra's proposal at every stage of the design process—drawings, models, onsite mockup—and knew exactly what it was getting: a curving, slightly inward-leaning wall of Corten steel, twelve feet high and a hundred and twenty feet long, which bisected the open plaza in front of the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building, in lower Manhattan. From the moment it was erected, in 1981, however, the piece generated unusually hostile reactions. This didn't surprise Serra. "The work I make does not allow for experience outside the conventions of sculpture as sculpture," he had said in a 1980 interview. "My audience is necessarily very limited." Serra thought that in time people would come around to "Tilted Arc." People, after all, were an essential part of it—his intention was to bring them into the sculptural experience. "It will . . . encompass the people who walk on the plaza in its volume," he said. "The placement of the sculpture will change the space of the plaza. After the piece is created, the space will be understood primarily as a function of the sculpture."

There is no doubt that, for many office workers in the Javits Building (itself an unusually depressing example of government architecture), "Tilted Arc" was an eyesore, a menacing, intimidating barrier whose tilt made some pedestrians feel it was about to fall on them. They hadn't asked to have a sculptural experience in their lunch hour, and they didn't want this one. But the arc might still be there if Edward D. Re, a federal judge whose office was in the building, had not mounted a one-man lobbying campaign against it. Judge Re wrote letters to the G.S.A., and he railed ceaselessly against the "rusted steel wall" that "desecrated" the plaza, and in his view harbored rats, posed unspecified security risks, and prevented the plaza from being used for concerts and other frolicsome events. His efforts apparently hit a nerve. In 1985, the G.S.A. scheduled three days of public hearings, at which fifty-eight people spoke out against "Tilted Arc" and a hundred and twelve defended it. The defenders included well-known figures like Joan Mondale and Mrs. Marion Javits, representing former Senator Javits, after whom the building was named, as well as a significant cross-section of the New York art world. Some of them did not particularly like the sculpture, but they felt that to allow the public art process to be overturned in this way would set a terrible precedent. The pro-Serra forces also complained that the G.S.A.'s regional administrator for New York, William J. Diamond, had compromised the issue by speaking out prior to the hearings in favor of "relocating" the sculpture—an option that Serra, with his usual intransigence, had vehemently ruled out. The work was "site-specific," he said. "To remove the work is to destroy the work." When the G.S.A. decided, soon after the hearings, that the sculpture would nevertheless be removed, Serra brought a thirty-million-dollar lawsuit against the agency for breach of contract. The case dragged on for several years, but in 1989 the court decided against him, and "Tilted Arc" was carted away to a government parking lot in Brooklyn.

Serra is still angry and bitter over what he considers this betrayal by his own government. The episode hurt his career, he feels, and kept him from getting new commissions in the United States for a long time. It should be noted, however, that the Museum of Modern Art put on a major Serra retrospective in 1986, that Alexander von Berswordt continued to get important commissions for him in Europe, and that Serra's work kept right on growing in authority, inventiveness, and sculptural power. He is one of those rare artists whose careers seem to have had no weak or fallow periods. Material success, moreover, has hardly been withheld from him: just about every major museum in the world now owns at least one Serra, and since he branched out from the Castelli Gallery, in 1992—showing with Blum Helman, with Pace, with Matthew Marks, and now mostly with Larry Gagosian—the pecuniary rewards have kept up with an almost unprecedented outpouring of critical acclaim. (One of the torqued spirals at the recent Gagosian show sold for more than three million dollars.) "Richard has managed to stay within a very strong vocabulary that's clearly his, but never to rest on his laurels," according to Kirk Varnedoe, who acquired several major works by Serra for the Museum of Modern Art when he was the director of the painting and sculpture department there. "His pieces have moved away from the brutality and raw aggressive menace of some of the early things, into something you could properly call sublime," Varnedoe told me. "I can't think of anything that's rivalled this. And the idea of reaching for the monumental scale without any sense of the undercutting subversion of irony—that's hard to find in contemporary art." When MOMA reopens, in 2005, after its massive rebuilding, one of the first big shows there will be another Serra retrospective, done in collaboration with the Dia Art Foundation.

Since "Tilted Arc," Serra's contracts for commissions have been handled exclusively by John Silberman, a lawyer who specializes in working with artists. Under the system devised by Silberman, when a client (private or corporate) wishes to commission a Serra, the artist visits the site and decides whether or not he wants to make a proposal. If he does, the client must agree to pay his proposal fee, which might be in the neighborhood of fifty thousand dollars. Serra then has a year to prepare a design, which the client can accept or reject. (To date, there have been no rejections.) Once a design is accepted, the client pays Serra a much larger fee (in the seven figures); this covers the purchase price and the fabrication costs, but not the transportation or installation expenses, which are paid for directly by the client. There have been rumors that Serra makes his clients sign legally binding pledges never to move a sculpture that he has sited and installed, but Silberman assured me that this is "absolutely not true." Serra's refusal to compromise in his work does not prevent him from being highly professional and realistic in negotiations over contracts. "When he calls someone a motherfucker, that doesn't help, of course," von Berswordt says, "but he rarely does that without a reason."

On a cool, overcast day in February, my wife and I drove upstate to Beacon, New York, a Hudson River town where the Dia Foundation is converting a former Nabisco plant into a museum for its collection of post-1960 art. Dia collects the work of fewer than twenty artists, but it does so in great depth: among the anointed are Joseph Beuys, Andy Warhol, John Chamberlain, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Hanne Darboven, Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, Cy Twombly, and Richard Serra. Although the museum will not open till next spring, three very large Serra sculptures were already in place, and we had come to watch the installation of a fourth, a torqued spiral, which had been shipped over from the factory in Germany a few days earlier. We were issued hard hats and escorted to a covered shed adjoining the plant, where the Nabisco freight cars used to load and unload. Three torqued ellipses—the forerunners of the torqued spirals—filled the huge space so snugly that there was barely room to squeeze by them on one side. Serra was at the other end of the floor, conferring with Ernst Fuchs, his German rigger, who oversees the installation of his most difficult pieces. In his hooded sweatshirt and wool watch cap, Serra looked indistinguishable from Fuchs and the eight or ten other riggers on the job, except that he carried his omnipresent black sketchbook and drawing pencil, which he used now and then to demonstrate some verbal idea or instruction. He wasn't wearing a hard hat, and neither was Clara, his wife, a slim, handsome woman whose quiet competence is indispensable to Serra's work, but who makes it clear that she takes no part in his aesthetic decisions.

Four of the spiral's five elements were already in place at this end of the building, suspended an inch or so from the floor by overhead cables, and the fifth was being lifted by crane from a flatbed truck on the road below. It came down very slowly, guided by three workmen on the floor, until its bottom edge rested on three smallish, wheeled dollies called skates. A rigger then mounted a ladder and unhooked the clamps that connected it to the crane. It hadn't dawned on me until that moment that this enormous slab of steel—fourteen feet high and weighing twenty-two tons—could stand by itself, without support. "The tendency to overturn is always inside the line of balance," Serra explained. "A lot of them curve both back and forward, but when you put them down they're stable." Serra was keyed up, buoyant. ("He jumps age groups when an installation is going well," Ealan Wingate, Gagosian's director, had told me. "He's like a seven-year-old with a new truck.") A moment later, he ran off to speak to the crane operator. "I wanted to thank him," he explained when he came back. "They're bringing in a new operator. This one said, 'Don't thank me, go tell my boss and save my butt,' so I did that, too." If Serra treated everyone the way he treats riggers, his life would run more smoothly. Some people say he has mellowed, but others (including a former Serra dealer) say he can be as irascible and ruthless as ever. His old friend Chuck Close, whom he recently threatened to sue over a dispute involving an interview with Serra in a book by Close, describes going up to Serra at a party and trying to tell him (in spite of Serra's having stopped speaking to him) how much he had admired his recent show at the Guggenheim Bilbao, and Serra saying, "You think I give a shit what you think?" ("I didn't say that," Serra told me. "I didn't say anything. I turned my back and walked away.") "I still consider Richard a friend, someone extraordinarily important in my life," Close said. "I think he's the best sculptor working today, and maybe the best artist. I don't think he's a bad person. But it's a goddam good thing he is a great artist, because a lot of this stuff wouldn't be forgiven."

Serra led us back to the other end of the building and into the first ellipse, which was also the first in the series. The idea for it had come to him, he said, during a visit to Borromini's church San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, in Rome, where an oval space on the floor is echoed by the same oval (it is called a Borromini ellipse) on the ceiling. Serra had decided that he wanted to make a sculpture by placing two Borromini ellipses at right angles to one another, and enclosing them in a continuous skin of steel. After two years of work and a lot of help from Frank Gehry's computer ex-

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MARCH BIRTHDAY, AND AFTER

Mild winter, then a birthday burst of snow.
A faint neuralgia, flitting tooth-root to
knee and shoulder-joint, a vacant head,
too many friendly wishes to parry,
too many cakes. Oh, let the years alone!
They pile up if we manage not to die,
glass dollars in the bank, dry pages on
the shelf. The boy I was no longer smiles

a greeting from the bottom of the well,
blue sky behind him from a storybook.
The Philco sings out "Hi-yo" by his sickbed;
he thinks that Mother, Father, mailman, and
the wheezy doctor with his wide black bag
exist for him, and so they do, or did.

*

Wife absent for a day or two, I wake
alone and older, the storm that aged me
distilled to a skin of reminiscent snow
so thin a blanket blades of grass show through.
Snow makes white shadows, there behind the yews,
dissolving in the sun's slant kiss, and pools
itself across the lawn as if to say,
Give me another hour, then I'll go.

The lawn's begun to green. Beyond the Bay—
where I have watched, these twenty years, dim ships
ply the horizon, feeding oil to Boston,
and blinking lights descend, night after night,
to land unseen at Logan—low land implies
a sprawl of other lives, beneath torn clouds.

Raw days, though spring has been declared.
I settle in, to that decade in which,
I'm told, most people die. Then, flying south,
I wonder why houses in their patterned crowds
look white, whatever their earthbound colors,
from the air. Golf courses, nameless rivers.
The naked Connecticut woods hold veins
of madder like the green veins of the sea.

The pilot takes us down Manhattan's spine—
the projects, Riverside cathedral, midtown
bristling up like some coarse porcupine.
We seem too low, my palms begin to sweat.
The worst can happen, we know it from the news.
Age I must, but die I would rather not.

*

Not yet. Home safe. New England's vernal drought
has taken a hit this week of sleety rain.
Spent harbingers, the snowdrops lie
in drenched, bedraggled clumps, their tired news
becoming weeds. The crocuses drink in
the leaden air and spread their stained-glass cups
to catch the filtered sun clapboards reflect,
and daffodils grow leggy like young girls.

Nature is never bored, and we whose lives
are linearly pinned to these
self-fascinated cycles can't complain,
though aches and pains and even dreams a-crawl
with wood lice of decay give pause to praise.
Birthday, death-day—what day is not both?

—*John Updike*

pert, they figured out how to do it. The first three torqued ellipses were made at the Beth Shipyard, in Sparrows Point, Maryland, which had a press that could bend two-inch-thick steel plates. The shipyard went out of business at that point, and since then Serra's torqued ellipses and torqued spirals have been made in Germany. The sixteen-foot-wide plates are rolled at one steel mill and shaped at another, a relatively small mill near Frankfurt that happens to have the biggest press in Europe, and whose business, thanks to Serra, is now devoted exclusively to working with him and other artists. The ellipses were first shown in New York, in 1997, at the Dia Foundation's exhibition space on West Twenty-second Street, and the *Times* critic Michael Kimmelman has described them as "that rarest thing in art, something new." Nobody had ever seen or walked into a space like this. "As the piece rises in elevation," Serra now pointed out to us, "it not only leans in but torques and turns outward, corkscrews up. The radius never changes. That's never been done in the history of form-making."

Serra walked us through the other three ellipses, which differed from each other in shape, proportion, and over-all effect. All three had done a lot of travelling lately—from Dia, in New York, to Los Angeles, for an important Serra show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, and from there to Spain for his 1999 show at the Guggenheim Bilbao, and now back here. Pointing to some blue-green streaks near the top of the third in line, Serra said that they were caused by saltwater spray during the Atlantic crossing. "Eventually, they'll oxidize out and it'll have the dark-brown Corten patina, but when something looks as good as that there's no point in sandblasting," he said. "I'm very, very happy about having this group of pieces together here. I owe a lot to Dia. They've been very generous and supportive. I think they're really interested in art, and not in other things." One of the reasons Serra likes Dia's conversion of the Nabisco plant into a museum is that "the building doesn't have any big architectural signature on it."

A little later, during a coffee break at a nearby bakery, I brought up the paradoxical alliance between nineteenth-century-scale industry and twenty-first-century art—factories morphing into museums, the German steel mill that works exclusively with artists, not to mention Serra's career of shaping industrial-weight steel into huge and poetic works of sculpture. "Spinoza predicted that art would dematerialize," he said, "and to a large degree it has. In a sense, my work is antithetical to that. But then, simultaneously, other things go on. As art dematerializes, the scale has grown larger. I'm using tons of steel to make the situation look lighter."

He thought for a minute, and said, "Listen, I just saw the Warhol show in London, and I loved it. But that's a very, very different experience from walking through a torqued ellipse. It's different in kind. When you go see Campbell's soup cans, you're playing a strategic game of the relevance of painting to figuration, to media, to commercialization. Abstraction gives you something different. It puts the spectator in a different relationship to his emotions. I think abstraction has been able to deliver an aspect of human experience that figuration has not—and it's still in its infancy. Abstract art has been going on for a century, which is nothing." Serra cut the conversation short because he was in a hurry to get back to Dia. The riggers wanted to work late, so they could finish installing and not have to pay for another day's crane rental, and he wanted to oblige them. "I've worked with riggers all my life," he said happily. "I have a very good relationship with them. I admire people who do a hard day's work, whatever it is." ♦

FICTION

FATHERS

BY ALICE MUNRO

On Friday morning last, Harvey Ryan Newcombe, a well-known farmer of Shelby Township, lost his life due to electrocution. The funeral was held Monday afternoon from Reavie Brothers Funeral Home and interment was in Bethel Cemetery. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Dahlia Newcombe could not possibly have had anything to do with her father's accident. It had happened when he reached up to turn on a light in a hanging brass socket while standing on the wet floor in a neighbor's stable. He had taken one of his cows there to visit the bull. For some reason that nobody could understand, he was not wearing his rubber boots.

All over the countryside that spring, there was a sound that would soon disappear. Perhaps it would have disappeared already, if it were not for the war. The war meant that the people who had the money to buy tractors could not find any to buy, and the few who already had tractors could not get the fuel to run them. So the farmers were out on the land with their horses for the spring plowing, and from time to time, near and far, you could hear them calling out their commands, in which there would be varying degrees of encouragement, or impatience, or warning. You couldn't hear the exact words, any more than you could make out what the seagulls were saying on their inland flights, or decipher the arguments of crows. From the tone of voice, though, you could probably tell when the farmers were swearing.

With one man, it was all swearing. It didn't matter which words he was using. He could have been saying "butter and eggs" or "afternoon tea" and the spirit would have been the same. As if he were boiling over with bitter rage, with loathing.

His name was Bunt Newcombe, and he had the first farm on the highway that curved southwest from town. Bunt was probably a nickname given to him at school, for going around with his head lowered, ready to bump and shove anybody aside. A boyish name, when you thought about it, not well matched to his behavior, his reputation as a grown man.

People sometimes wondered what could be the matter with him. He wasn't poor, after all—he had two hundred acres of decent land, and a banked barn with a peaked silo, and a drive shed, and a square red brick house, though the house, like the man himself, had a look of bad temper. There were dark-green blinds pulled most or all of the way down on the windows, no curtains visible, and a scar along the front wall where the porch had been torn away. The front door must, at one time, have opened onto that porch, which no steps had been built to replace; now it opened three feet above weeds and rubble.

Bunt Newcombe was not a drunk. Nor was he a gambler—he was too careful of his money for that. But he was mean in both senses of the word, and he seemed to have been born that way. He mistreated his horses, and it goes without saying that he mistreated his family. In the winter he took his milk cans to town on his sleigh just at that time of the morning when everybody was going to school, and he didn't slow down, as other farmers did, to give you a ride. He picked up the whip instead.

Mrs. Newcombe was never with him, on the sleigh or in the car. She walked to town, wearing old-fashioned galoshes even when the weather got warm, and a long drab coat and a scarf over her hair. She mumbled hello but never looked at you, and sometimes turned her head away, not speaking at all. I think she was missing some teeth. That was more common then than now, and it was more common also for people to make plain their state of mind, in their speech and dress and gestures, so that everything about them said, "I know how I should look and behave and nobody can say otherwise," or, "I don't care—things have gone too far with me, and you can think what you like."

Nowadays, Mrs. Newcombe might be seen as a serious case, terminally depressed, and her husband, with his brutish ways, might be looked on with concern and compassion as someone who needed help. In those days, they were just taken as they were and allowed to live out their lives without a thought of intervention—regarded, in fact, as a source of interest and entertainment. Some people were born to make others miserable, and some let themselves in for being made miserable, and that was all there was to it.

The Newcombes had five daughters, then one son. The girls' names were April, Corinne, Gloria, Susannah, and Dahlia. I thought these names fanciful and lovely, and I would have liked the daughters' looks to match them—as if they were the beautiful children of an ogre in a fairy tale. April and Corinne had been gone from home for some time, so I had no way of knowing what they looked like. Gloria was married and had dropped from view, as married girls did. Susannah worked in the hardware store, and she was a stout girl, not at all pretty, but quite normal-looking—not cowed like her mother or brutal like her father.

Dahlia was a couple of years older than I was. She was the first member of the family to go to high school. She was sturdy and handsome, though not my idea of an ogre's daughter, with rippling yellow hair and a sweetly pining expression. Her hair was brown, her shoulders square, her breasts firm and high. She got quite respectable marks and was notably good at games, particularly basketball.

During my first few months of high school, I found myself walking part of the way to school with her. We had lived

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our lives within shouting distance of each other, you might say, but the school districts were divided in such a way that I had always gone to the town elementary school while the Newcombes had gone to a country school, farther out along the highway. But now that we were both going to the high school we would usually meet where our roads joined, and if either of us saw the other coming we would wait. Walking together did not mean that we became particular friends. It was just that it would have seemed odd to walk singly when we were going the same way and to the same place. I don't know what we talked about. I have an idea that there were long periods of silence, which were not disagreeable.

One morning Dahlia didn't appear, and I went on alone. In the cloakroom at school, she said to me, "I won't be coming in that way from now on, because I'm staying in town now. I'm staying at Gloria's."

And we hardly spoke again until one day in early spring—that time I was talking about, with the trees bare but reddening, and the crows and the seagulls busy, and the farmers hollering to their horses. She caught up to me as we were leaving school. She said, "You going right home?" I said yes, and she started to walk beside me.

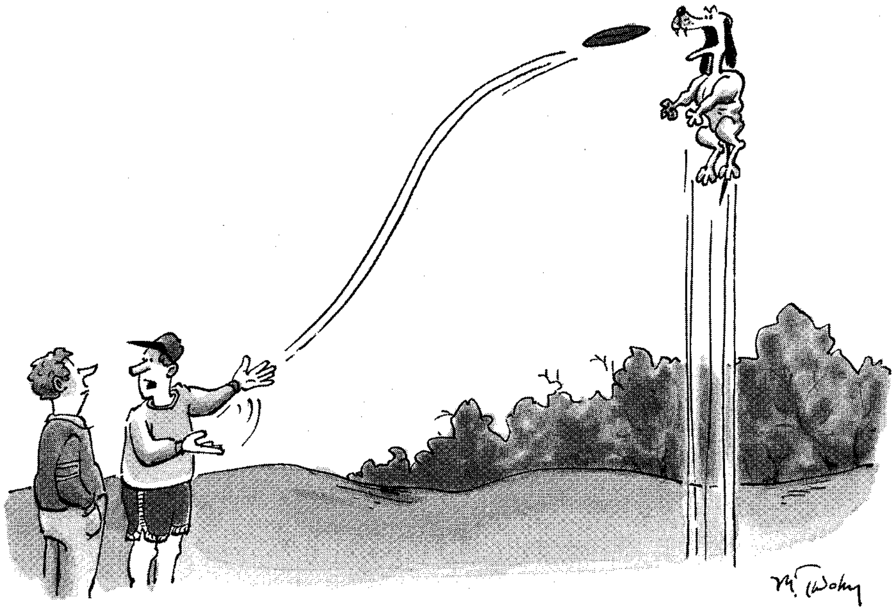
I asked her if she was living at home again, and she said, "Nope. Still at Gloria's."

When we had walked a bit farther, she said, "I'm just going along out there to see what's what."

Over the winter, she had shone as the best player on the basketball team, and the team had nearly won the county championship. It gave me a feeling of distinction to be walking with her. She must have started high school with all the business of her family dragging behind her, but now she had been allowed, to an extent, to slip free of that. The independence of spirit, the faith you had to have in your body, to become an athlete won respect and discouraged anybody who would think of tormenting you. She was well dressed, too—she had very few clothes but they were quite all right, not like the matronly hand-me-downs that country girls often wore, or the homemade outfits my mother labored at for me. I remember a red turtleneck sweater she often wore, and a pleated Royal Stewart skirt. Maybe Gloria and Susannah thought of her as the representative and pride of the family and had pooled some of their slight resources to dress her handsomely.

We were out of town before she spoke again.

"I got to keep track of what my old



"Of course, he was already very good at Frisbee before steroids."

man is up to," she said. "He better not be beating up on Raymond."

Raymond. That was the brother.

"Does he beat up on him?" I said. I felt as if I had to pretend to know less about her family than I—and everybody—actually did.

"Yeah. Some," she said. "Raymond used to get off better than the rest of us, but now he's the only one left, I wonder."

I said, "Did he beat you?" I tried to sound as if I felt this was an everyday and not even very interesting matter.

"Are you kidding?" she said. "Before I got away the last time, it looked like he was going to brain me with the shovel. And I was yelling at him, 'Come on. Come on, let's see you kill me. Then you'll get hung.' Yeah. But then I thought, O.K., but I wouldn't get the satisfaction of seeing him. Hung. I hate him," she said, in the same breezy but formidable tone. "If somebody told me he was drowning in the river, I would go and stand on the bank and cheer."

"What if he takes after you now?"

"I don't mean him to see me. I just mean to spy on him."

When we came to the division of our roads, she said, "Come on with me. I'll show you how I spy."

We walked across the bridge and looked through the cracks between the planks at the high-flowing river.

"In the wintertime, I used to come out after dark and get right up at the kitchen windows, but it stays light too late now to do that," she said. "What I wanted was for him to see the boot marks in the snow and know there was somebody had been spying on him and go out of his mind."

I asked whether he had a shotgun.

"Sure," she said. "Same story. Shoots me and gets hung and goes to Hell. Don't worry—he's not going to see us."

Before we were in sight of the Newcombes' buildings, we climbed a bank on the opposite side of the road, where there was a thick growth of sumac bordering a planted windbreak of spruce. When Dahlia, ahead of me, began to walk in a crouch, I did the same. And when she stopped, I stopped.

There was the barn and the barnyard full of cows. I realized, once we had stopped making our own noise among the branches, that we had been hearing them all along. There wasn't enough fresh grass for them to be put out to pasture yet—the low places in the pastures were still mostly under water—but they were let out of the stable to exercise before the evening milking. From behind our screen of sumac, we looked right down at the cows that were jostling each other and blundering around in the muck, complaining of their full udders. Even if we snapped a branch or spoke above a whisper, there would be too much going on over there for anybody to hear us.

Raymond, a boy about ten years old, came around the corner of the barn. He had a stick but he was just tapping the cows' rumps with it, pushing them and saying, "So-boss, so-boss," in an easygoing rhythm and urging them toward the stable door. It was the sort of mixed herd most farms had at that time. A black cow, a rusty-red cow, a pretty golden cow that must have been part Jersey, others splotched brown-and-white and black-and-white in all sorts of combinations. They hadn't been deprived of their horns, which gave them that look of dignity and ferocity that cows have since lost.

A man's voice, Bunt Newcombe's voice, called from the stable. "Hurry up," or "What's the holdup?"

Raymond called back, "O.K., O.K." His tone did not indicate anything to me, except that he didn't seem scared. But Dahlia said, "Yah. He's givin' him lip. Good for him."

Bunt Newcombe came out of a side door of the stable. He was wearing overalls and a greasy barn smock, and he moved with an odd swing of one leg.

"Bum leg," Dahlia said. "I heard a horse kicked him but I thought it was too good to be true. Too bad it wasn't his head."

He was carrying a pitchfork. But he used it only to pitch manure out of that doorway while the cows were driven in at the other.

Perhaps a son was abhorred less than daughters?

"If I had a gun I could get him now," Dahlia said. "I wouldn't mind. I should do it while I'm still young enough. Then I don't get hung."

"You'd go to jail," I said.

"So what? He runs his own jail. Maybe they'd never catch me."

She couldn't have meant what she was saying. If she had had any such intentions, wouldn't it be crazy of her to tell me about them? I might betray her. I would not intend to, but somebody might get it out of me. Because of the war that was just ending that spring, I often thought about what it would be like to be tortured. How much would I be able to stand? At the dentist's, when he hit a nerve, I had asked myself, If a pain like that went on and on unless I betrayed where my father was hiding with the Resistance, what would I do?

When the cows were all inside and Raymond and his father had shut the stable doors, we walked, still bent, through the sumac and, once out of sight, climbed down to the road. I thought that Dahlia might say now that she had only been kidding about the shooting part, but she didn't. I wondered why she had not said anything about her mother—about being worried for her mother as she had been for Raymond. Then I thought that she probably despised her mother, for what she had put up with and what she had become. You would have to show some spirit to make the grade with Dahlia. I wouldn't have wanted her to know that I was afraid of the horned cows.

We must have said goodbye when she took the route back to town, to Gloria's house, and I turned onto our dead-end road. I kept thinking about whether she could really kill her father. I had a strange idea that she was too young to do it—as if killing somebody were like driving a car or voting or getting married. I also had some idea—though I would not have known how to express it—that killing him wouldn't be any relief to her, hating him having got to be such a habit. She had taken me along with her not to confide in me or because I was anything like an intimate friend—she had just wanted someone to see her hating.

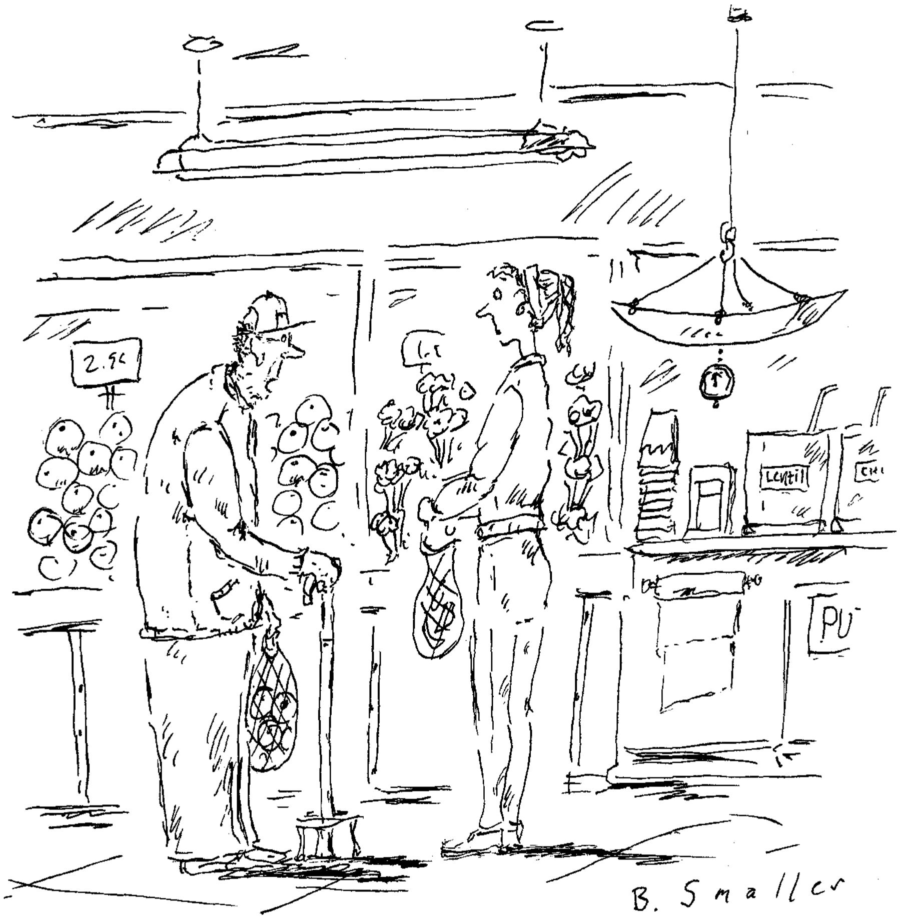
At one time, there had been perhaps a dozen houses on our road. Most were small cheap rental cottages—until you got to our house, which was an ordinary farmhouse on a small farm. And, not so long ago, they had all had people living in them. But when the war jobs had taken those families away, some of the houses had been carted elsewhere to serve as garages or chicken sheds. A couple of those that were left were empty, and the rest were mostly occupied by old people: the old bachelor blacksmith; the couple who used to have a grocery store and still had an Orange Crush sign in their front window; another couple who bootlegged and buried their money, it was said, in quart sealers in the back yard; and the old women who had been left on their own. Mrs. Currie raised dogs that raced about barking insanely all day in a wire pen and at night were taken inside her house, which was partly built into the bank of a hill and must have been very dark and smelly. Mrs. Horne raised flowers, and her tiny house and yard were like an embroidery sampler—clematis vines, rose of Sharon, every sort of phlox and delphinium. Bessie Stewart dressed smartly and went uptown in the afternoons to smoke cigarettes and drink coffee in the Paragon Restaurant. Though unmarried, she was said to have a "friend."

One empty house had belonged, or maybe still belonged, to a Mrs. Eddy. For a short while, years earlier—that is, four or five years before I ever met Dahlia, a long time in my life—some people named Wainwright had lived in that house. They were related to Mrs. Eddy, and she was letting them live there, but she wasn't living with them. She had already been taken away to wherever she was taken.

Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright came from Chicago, where they had both worked as window dressers for a department store. The store had closed down or had decided that it didn't need so many windows dressed—whatever had happened, they had lost their jobs and come here, to live in Mrs. Eddy's house and try to set up a wallpapering business.

They had a daughter, Frances, who was a year younger than I was. She was small and thin and she got out of breath easily, because she had asthma. On my first day in grade five, Mr. Wainwright came out and stopped me on the road, with Frances lagging behind him. He asked me if I would take Frances to school and show her where the grade-four classroom was, and if I would be her friend, because she didn't know anybody yet or where anything was. Frances was all dolled up in a very short checked cotton dress with a flounce around the skirt and a matching hair ribbon.

Soon it became understood that I would walk to school with Frances and walk home with her afterward. We both carried our lunches to school, but as I had not expressly been asked to eat lunch with her I never did. Very few students lived far enough away to eat



"I would die, but I have a rent-controlled apartment."

lunch at the school, but there happened to be one girl in my own class who did. Her name was Wanda Louise Palmer, and her parents owned and lived in the dance hall to the south of town. She and I ate together and formed a friendship of sorts, which was based mostly on avoiding Frances. We ate in the girls' basement, behind a barricade of broken old desks that were heaped up in a corner. As soon as we finished, we'd sneak out and leave the school grounds to walk around the nearby streets or go downtown and look in store windows. Wanda Louise should have been an interesting companion, because of her life at the dance hall, but she was so apt to lose track of what she was telling me (but not to stop talking) that she was actually very boring. All we really had in common was our bond against Frances, and our desperate stifled laughter when we peered through the desks and saw her looking for us. After a while, she didn't do that anymore; she ate her lunch alone.

I would like to think that it was Wanda Louise who pointed her out to our classmates, when we stood in line ready to march into the schoolroom, as the girl we were always trying to avoid. But I could have been the one who did that, and certainly I went along with the joke, and was glad to be on the side of those doing the giggling and excluding. Living on the outskirts of town, as I did, and being easily embarrassed yet a showoff, as I improbably was, I could never stand up for anybody who was being humiliated, never rise above a feeling of relief that it was not me.

The hair ribbons became part of it. Just to go up to Frances and say, "I love your hair ribbon. Where did you get it?" and have her say, in innocent bewilderment, "In Chicago," was a lasting source of glee. For a while, "in Chicago," or just "Chicago," became the answer to everything. "Where did you go after school yesterday?" "Chicago." Or "Where did your sister get her hair waved?" "Oh, in Chicago." Some girls got into fits of laughing that were like hiccups; some feared that they were going to be sick.

How much Frances was aware of, I don't know. She may have thought that there was some special place where girls in my class always went to have lunch. She may not have understood what the giggling was about. She never asked about it.

She tried to hold my hand crossing the street, but I pulled away and told her not to. She said she always used to hold Sadie's hand, when Sadie walked her to school in Chicago. "But that was different," she said. "There aren't any streetcars here."

One day, she offered me a cookie left over from her lunch. I refused, so as not to feel an inconvenient obligation. "Go on," she said. "My mother put it in for you."

Then I understood. Her mother put in this extra cookie, this treat, for me to eat when we had our lunches together. She had never told her mother that I didn't show up at lunchtime and she couldn't find me. She must have been eating the extra cookie herself, but now the dishonesty was bothering her. So every day from then on she offered it, almost at the last minute, as if she were embarrassed, and every day I accepted.

We began to have a little conversation on our walks, starting when we were almost clear of town. We were both interested in movie stars. She had seen far more movies than I had—in Chicago, you could see movies every afternoon, and Sadie used to take her—but I walked past our theatre and looked at the stills every time the picture changed, so I knew something about them, too. And I had one movie magazine at home, which a visiting cousin had left. It had pictures of Deanna Durbin's wedding in it, so we talked about that, and about what we wanted our own weddings to be like—the bridal gowns and the bridesmaids' dresses and

the flowers and the going-away outfits. The same cousin had given me a present—a "Ziegfeld Girl" cutout book. Frances had seen the "Ziegfeld Girl" movie, and we talked about which Ziegfeld girl we would like to be. She chose Judy Garland because she could sing, and I chose Hedy Lamarr because she was so beautiful.

"My father and mother used to sing in the Light Opera Society," she said. "They sang in 'The Pirates of Penzance.'"

Lightopra society. Pirazapenzanze. I filed those words away but could not ask what they meant.

If her mother came out to greet us, she might ask if I could come in and play. I always said I had to go straight home.

Shortly before Christmas, Mrs. Wainwright asked me if I could come to have supper the next Sunday. She said it would be a little thank-you party and a farewell party, now that they were going away. I was on the point of saying that I didn't think my mother would let me, but when I heard the word "farewell" I saw the invitation in a different light. The burden of Frances would be lifted, no further obligation would be involved, and no intimacy enforced. Mrs. Wainwright said that she had written a little note to my mother, since they didn't have a phone.

My mother would have liked it better if I had been asked to some town girl's house, but she said yes. She, too, took it into account that the Wainwrights were moving away.

"I don't know what they were thinking of," she said. "Anybody who can afford wallpapering here does it themselves."

"Where are you going?" I asked Frances.

"Burlington."

"Where's that?"

"It's in Canada, too. We're going to stay with my aunt and uncle, but we'll have our own toilet upstairs and our sink and a hot plate. My dad's going to get a better job."

"What doing?"

"I don't know."

Their Christmas tree was in a corner. The front room had only one window, and if they had put the tree there it would have blocked off all the light. It was not a big or well-shaped tree but it was smothered in tinsel, gold and silver beads, and beautiful intricate ornaments. In another corner of the room was a parlor stove, a woodstove, in which the fire seemed to have been recently lit. The air was still cold and heavy with the forest smell of the tree. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Wainwright was very confident about the fire. First one and then the other kept fiddling with the damper and timidly reaching in with the poker and patting the pipe to see if it was getting hot or, by any chance, too hot. The wind was fierce that day, and sometimes blew the smoke down the chimney.

That was no matter to Frances and me. On a card table set up in the middle of the room there was a Chinese-checker board, ready for two people to play, and a stack of movie magazines. I fell upon them at once. I had never imagined such a feast. It made no difference that they were not new and that some had been looked through so often they were almost falling apart. Frances stood beside my chair, interfering with my pleasure a little by telling me what was just ahead and what was in a magazine I hadn't opened yet. This was obviously her idea and I had to be patient with her—the magazines were her property, and if she had taken it into her head to remove them I would have been more grief-stricken than when my father drowned the kittens I had found in the barn.

Frances was wearing an outfit that could have come out of one of those magazines—a party dress of deep-red velvet with a white lace collar and a black ribbon threaded through the lace. Her mother's dress was exactly the same, and they both had their hair done the same way—a roll in front and long in the back. Frances's hair was thin and fine and, what with her excitement and her jumping around to show me things, the roll was already coming undone.

It was getting dark in the room. There were wires sticking out of the ceiling, but no bulbs. Mrs. Wainwright brought in a lamp with a long cord that plugged into the wall. The light shone through the pale-green glass of a lady's skirt.

"That's Scarlett O'Hara," Frances said. "Daddy and I gave it to Mother for her birthday."

We never got around to the Chinese checkers, and in time the board was removed. We shifted the magazines to the floor. A piece of lace—not a real tablecloth—was laid across the table. Dishes followed. Evidently, Frances and I were to eat in here, by ourselves. Both parents were involved in laying the table—Mrs. Wainwright wearing a fancy apron over her red velvet and Mr. Wainwright in shirtsleeves and a silk-backed vest.

When everything was set up, we were called over. I had expected Mr. Wainwright to leave the serving of the food to his wife—in fact, I had already been very surprised to see him hovering with knives and forks—but now he pulled out our chairs and announced that he was our waiter. When he was that close, I could smell him, and hear his breathing, which sounded eager, like a dog's. His smell was of talcum and lotion, suggesting an innocent intimacy that made me think of a baby's fresh diapers.

"Now, my lovely young ladies," he said. "I am going to bring you some champagne."

He brought a pitcher of lemonade and filled our glasses. I was alarmed, until I took a sip of it—I knew that champagne was an alcoholic drink. We never had such drinks in our house, and neither did anybody I knew. Mr. Wainwright watched me taste it and seemed to guess my feelings.

"Is that all right? Not worried now?" he said. "All satisfactory to your ladyship?"

Then he made a bow.

"Now," he said. "What would you care for, to eat?" He reeled off a list of unfamiliar things—all I recognized was venison, which I certainly had never tasted. The list ended up with sweetbreads. Frances giggled and said, "We'll have sweetbreads, please. And potatoes."

I expected the sweetbreads to be like their name—some sort of bun with jam or brown sugar, but couldn't see why that would come with potatoes. What arrived, however, were small pads of meat wrapped in crisp bacon, and little potatoes with their skins on, which had been rolled in hot butter and crisped in the pan. Also thin sticks of carrot with a slightly candied flavor. Those I could have done without, but I had never eaten potatoes so delicious or meat so tender. All I wished was for Mr. Wainwright to stay in the kitchen instead of hanging around us pouring out lemonade and asking if everything was to our liking.

Dessert was another wonder—a satin vanilla pudding with a sort of lid of golden-brown baked sugar. Tiny cakes to go with it, iced on all sides with very dark, rich chocolate.

When not a lick or a crumb was left, I sat replete. I looked at the fairy-tale tree with the ornaments that could have been miniature castles or angels. Drafts came in around the window and moved the branches a little, causing the showers of tinsel to wave and the ornaments to turn slightly to show new points of light. Full of this rich and delicate food, I seemed to have entered a dream, in which everything I saw was both potent and benign.

I saw the firelight, too, a dull rusty glow up in the pipe, and I said to Frances, without alarm, "I think your pipe's on fire."

She called out in a party spirit, "Pipe's on fire," and in came Mr. Wainwright, who had finally retired to the kitchen, and Mrs. Wainwright close behind him.

Mrs. Wainwright said, "Oh, God, Billy. What do we do?"

Mr. Wainwright said in a squeaky, scared, unfatherly voice, "Close off the draft, I guess."

He did that, then yelped and shook his hand, which must have got burned. Now they both stood and looked at the red pipe, and she said, "There's something you're supposed to put on it. What is it? Baking soda?" She ran to the kitchen and came back with the box of baking soda, saying, "Right on the flames." Mr. Wainwright was still nursing his burned hand, so she wrapped her apron round her own hand and used the stove lifter and scattered the powder on the flames. There was a spitting sound as they began to die down, and smoke rose into the room.

"Girls," she said. "Girls. Maybe you better run outside." She sounded about to break into tears.

I remembered something, from a similar crisis at home.

"You wrap wet towels round the pipe," I said.

"Wet towels," she said. "That sounds like a good idea. Yes." She ran to the kitchen, where we heard her pumping water. Mr. Wainwright followed her, holding his burned hand up in front of his eyes, and both returned with towels dripping. Some were wrapped around the pipe, and as soon as they began to heat up and dry others were put in their place. The room began to smell of burned creosote, and Frances started coughing.

"Get some air," Mr. Wainwright said. It took him a while, with his good hand, to wrench open the unused front door, letting fly the bits of old newspaper and rotten rags that had been stuffed around it. There was a snowdrift outside, a white wave lapping at the room.

"Throw snow on the fire," Frances said, still sounding jubilant between coughs, and she and I picked up armfuls of snow and threw them into the stove. Some hit what was left of the fire and some missed and melted and ran into the puddles that the drip from the towels had already made on the floor.

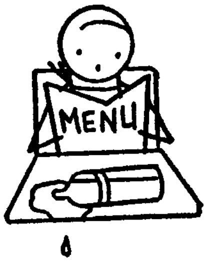
In the midst of these puddles, the danger over and the room growing frigid, stood Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright with their arms around each other, laughing and commiserating.

"Oh, your poor hand," Mrs. Wainwright said. "And I wasn't the least bit sympathetic about it. I was so afraid the house was going to burn down." She tried to kiss the hand, and he said, "Ouch. Ouch." He had tears in his eyes from the smoke or the pain.

She patted him on the arms and shoulders and down lower, even on his buttocks, saying, "Poor, poor sweet baby," and things of that sort, while he made a pouty face and kissed her with a great smack on the mouth. Then with his good hand he squeezed her behind.

It looked as if this fondling could go on for some time.

"Shut the door, it's freezing," Frances cried, all red from coughing and happy excitement. If she meant for her parents to do this, they took no notice, but went on with the appalling behavior that did not seem to embarrass her or even to be worth her notice. She and I got hold of the door and pushed it against the wind that was whipping up over the drift and blowing more snow into the house.



I did not tell about any of this at home, though the food and the ornaments and the fire were so interesting. There were too many other things that I could not describe and that made me feel off balance, slightly sick, so that somehow I did not like to mention any of it. The way the adults had put themselves at the service of children. The charade of Mr. Wainwright as the waiter, his thick soapy-white hands and pale face and wings of fine glistening light-brown hair. The insistence—the too-closeness—of his soft footsteps in fat plaid slippers. Then the laughing, so inappropriate following a near-disaster. The shameless hands and the smacking kiss. There was a creepy menace about all this, which started with the falsity of corralling me into playing the role of little friend—both of them had called me that—when I was not. Treating me as good and guileless when I was not.

Was this just the menace of love, or of lovingness? If that was what it was, then you would have to say that I had made its acquaintance too late. Such slopping-over of attention made me feel cornered and humiliated, almost as if somebody had taken a peep into my pants. Even the wonderful unfamiliar food was suspect in my memory. The movie magazines alone escaped the taint.

By the end of the Christmas holidays, the Wainwrights' house was empty. The snow was so heavy that year that the kitchen roof caved in. Even then, nobody bothered to pull the house down or put up a "No Trespassing" sign, and for years children—I was among them—poked around in the risky ruins just to see what they could find. People didn't seem to worry then about injuries or liability. No movie magazines came to light.

I did tell about Dahlia. By then, I was an entirely different person, to my own way of thinking, than the girl who had been in the Wainwrights' house. In my early teens, I had become the entertainer around home. I don't mean that I was always trying to make the family laugh—though I did that, too—but that I relayed news and gossip. I told about things that had happened at school or in town. Or I just described the looks or speech of someone I had seen on the street. I had learned how to do this in a way that would not get me rebuked for being sarcastic or vulgar or too smart for my own good. I had mastered a deadpan, almost demure style that could make people laugh even when they thought they shouldn't and which made it hard to tell whether I was innocent or malicious.

That was the way I told about Dahlia's creeping around in the sumac to spy on her father, about her hatred of him and her mention of murder. And that was the way any story about the Newcombes had to be told, not just by me. The undeviating style of Bunt Newcombe's behavior had made him—and his wife—into such caricatures that a story ought to confirm, to everybody's satisfaction, just how thoroughly and faithfully they played out their roles. And now Dahlia, as well, was seen to belong to the picture. The spying, the threats, the melodrama. His coming after her with the shovel. Her notion that if he had killed her he would have been hanged. And that she wouldn't be if she did it while she was still a juvenile.

"Hard to get a court around here to convict her," my father said.

My mother said, "It's a shame."

It seems strange to me now that we could conduct this conversation so easily, without its seeming ever to enter our heads that my father had beaten me, at times, and that I had screamed out not that I wanted to kill him but that I wanted to die. And that this had happened not so long ago—three or four times, I would think, in the years when I was around eleven or twelve. It had happened in between my knowing Frances and my knowing Dahlia. I was being punished, at those times, for some falling-out with my mother, some back talk or intransigence. She would fetch my father from his outside work to deal with me, and I would await his arrival first in balked fury and then in a sickening despair. I felt as if it must be my very self that they were after, my dark and disputatious self that had to be beaten out of me. When my father began to remove his belt—that was what he beat me with—I would begin to scream and plead my case incoherently, in a way that seemed to make him despise me. And, indeed, my behavior then would arouse contempt—it did not show a proud or even a self-respecting nature. I did not care. When the belt was raised—in the second before it descended—there was a moment of terrible revelation. Injustice ruled and detestation was supreme. How could I not find myself howling at such perversion in the universe?

If he were alive now, I am sure my father would say that I exaggerate, that the humiliation he meant to inflict was not so great, that my offenses were perplexing, and whatever other way is there to handle children? I was causing trouble for him and grief for my mother, and I had to be persuaded to change my ways.

And I did. I grew older. I became useful around the house. I learned not to give lip. I found ways to make myself agreeable.

When I was with Dahlia, listening to her, when I was walking home by myself, when I was telling the story to my family, I never once thought to compare my situation with hers. Of course not. We were decent people. My mother, though sometimes distraught at the behavior of her family, did not go into town with snaggly hair or wear floppy rubber galoshes. My father did not swear. He was a man of honor and competence and humor, and he was the parent I sorely wanted to please. I did not hate him, could not consider hating him. Instead, I saw what he hated in me. A shaky arrogance in my nature, something brazen yet cowardly, was what awoke in him this fury.

Shame. The shame of being beaten, and the shame of cringing from the beating. Perpetual shame. Exposure. And something connects this, as I feel it now, with the shame, the queasiness that crept up on me when I heard the padding of Mr. Wainwright's slippered feet and his breathing. There were demands that fathers made that seemed indecent, there were horrid invasions, both sneaky and straightforward. Some that I could tighten my skin against, others that left it raw. All in the hazards of life as a child.

And, as the saying goes, about this matter of what molds or warps us, if it's not one thing it will be another. At least that was a saying of my elders in those days. Mysterious, uncomforting, unaccusing. ♦

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THE CRITICS

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BOOKS

SONGBIRD

Maya Angelou takes another look at herself.

BY HILTON ALS

By the time the poet and playwright Maya Angelou published the first volume of her memoirs, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," at the age of forty-one, she had already survived a number of personal misfortunes that might have crushed a lesser will and stilled a less hardy pen. When she was three, Marguerite Johnson (Angelou is a variation on her first husband's name) and her four-year-old brother, Bailey, were dispatched alone on a train from Long Beach, California, where they had lived with their parents, to the home of their paternal grandmother, whom they called Momma. Angelou writes:

> We had arrived in the musty little town, wearing tags on our wrists which instructed—"To Whom It May Concern"—that we were Marguerite and Bailey Johnson Jr., . . . en route to Stamps, Arkansas. . . .
>
> Our parents had decided to put an end to their calamitous marriage, and Father shipped us home to his mother. A porter had been charged with our welfare—he got off the train the next day in Arizona—and our tickets were pinned to my brother's inside coat pocket.

We're in "Jane Eyre" territory here. But, growing up under Momma's watchful eye in the American South, these orphans of convenience lived in a world that was, in Angelou's recollection, largely untroubled by social ambiguity—a world neatly divided between black and white and between women and men, which is to say, between good and evil. The evil that Angelou witnessed there was generally directed at black women—the mules of the world, as Zora Neale Hurston called them. It shaped her days and, in large part, informed her current public persona of fiery, lyrical dignity.

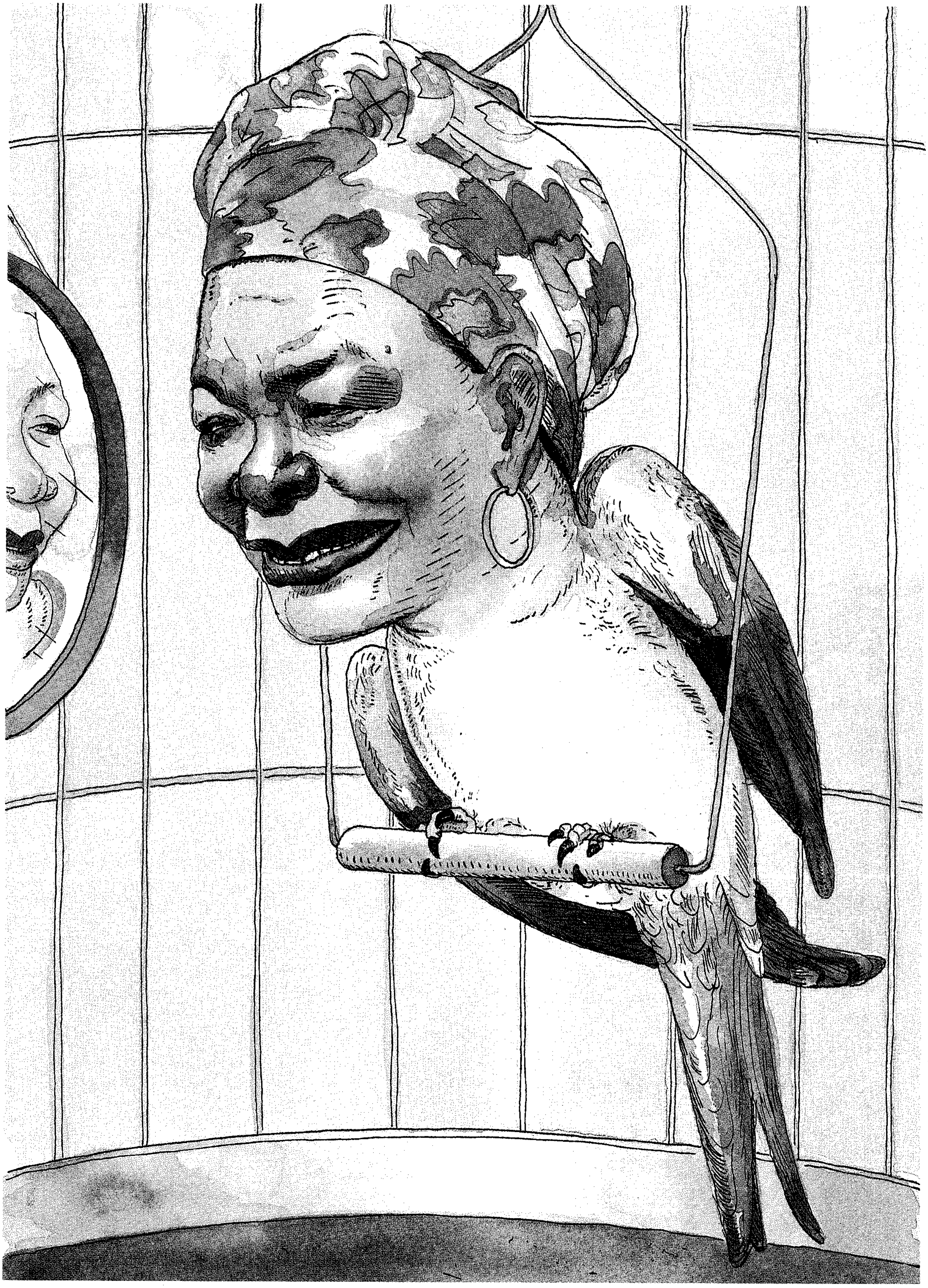
As a young girl, Angelou saw her grandmother, a religious and thrifty matriarch who owned the only general store in Stamps that catered to blacks, bend but not break when confronted with white girls who refused to address her as "Miss." And she saw Momma protect her son, the partly paralyzed Uncle Willie, with whom she ran the store, from the Ku Klux Klan by hiding him in her deep, rooty-smelling vegetable bin. Then, one day, when Maya was seven, her no-account daddy, with his smile as slick as brilliantine, appeared unannounced in Stamps. "It was awful for Bailey and me to encounter the reality one abrupt morning," Angelou writes. "We, or at any rate I, had built such elaborate fantasies about him and the illusory mother that seeing him in the flesh shredded my inventions like a hard yank on a paper chain." It was time for the children to return to their glamorous if feckless mother, Vivian Johnson, a sometime nurse and poker dealer, who was now in St. Louis. Their father ferried them there and disappeared a few days later. "And I was neither glad nor sorry," Angelou adds. "He was a stranger, and if he chose to leave us with a stranger, it was all of one piece."

Vivian, the hard, gin-drinking sister of four no-nonsense brothers, would shoot a man as soon as look at him. She was light-skinned with straight hair, and had little in common with Maya, a dark, awkward ugly duckling who twisted and turned in front of the mirror, determined to find a prettier self. Like most girls, Angelou wanted to define herself by not becoming her mother. But how could she compete with a woman who was so smart and cunning, whom so many men found irresistible? At Vivian's house, Maya sometimes slept in the same bed as her mother and her mother's lover, Mr. Freeman, a big flabby man who pressed his erection against her. Then Mr. Freeman went further, and he threatened to kill Bailey if Maya told anyone. The rape was discovered, and Freeman was brought to trial and convicted but immediately released. Three days later, he was kicked to death, perhaps by Vivian's brothers, and Maya and Bailey were sent back to Stamps, where Maya barely spoke for five years. "Just my breath, carrying my words out, might poison people and they'd curl up and die," she wrote. Eventually, when she was in eighth grade, Maya recited a poem for a beloved family friend and found her voice again, in more ways than one.

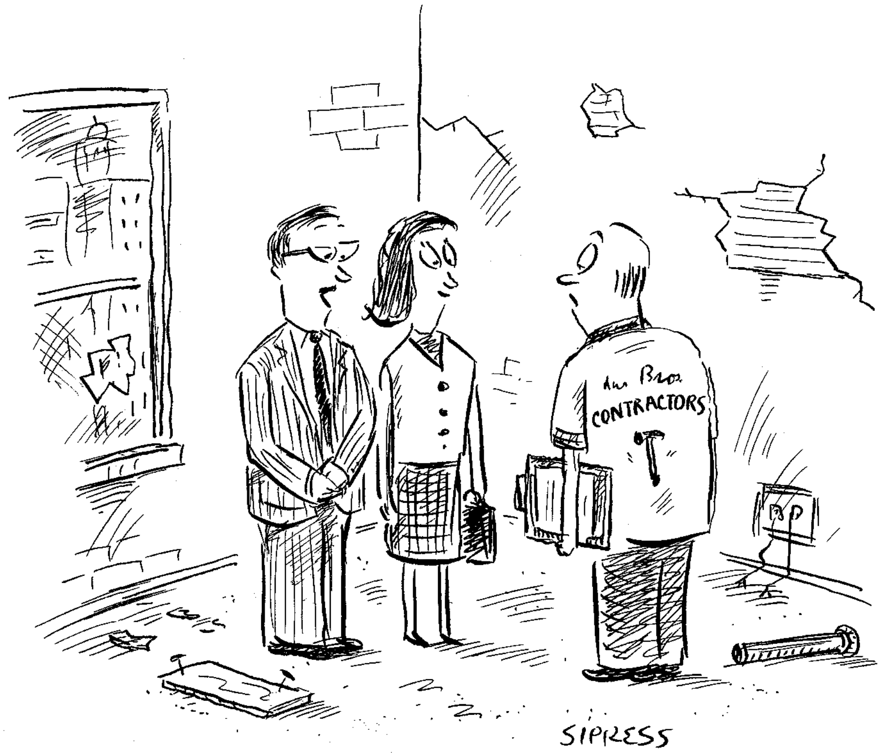
When "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" came out, in 1970, Angelou was hailed as a new kind of memoirist. As Mary Helen Washington writes in her invaluable study "Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women 1860-1960," black women autobiographers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had been "frozen into self-consciousness by the need to defend black women and men against the vicious and prevailing stereotypes." Relegated to the margins of life, they found it difficult to rewrite themselves as central characters. Only in private could they talk about their personal lives. But Angelou took those stories public. She wrote about blackness from the inside, without apology or defense. The writer Julian Mayfield called Angelou's book "a work of art which eludes description because the black aesthetic—another way of saying 'the black experience'—has too long been neglected to be formalized by weary clichés." Angelou, Mayfield suggested, had set a precedent.

In fact, the approach of the book, with its clear-eyed evocations of black life in the mid-twentieth century, would have seemed familiar to those who had read Paule Marshall's 1967 story "To Da-duh, in Memoriam." Marshall was a

BARRY BLITT



"You're going to be famous," Billie Holiday told Angelou after seeing her calypso act. "But it won't be for singing."



"Would it be possible for you to totally exaggerate how much it will cost and how long it will take, so we'll be pleasantly surprised at the end?"

close friend of Angelou's, and it's possible that her portrait of a first-generation American girl who goes to visit her grandmother in Barbados was a touchstone of sorts for the voice that Angelou developed in her own memoir: conversational, but achingly aware of the ways in which what James Baldwin called "the Old Country" could contribute to the making of the new black woman. The success of "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," like that of many memoirs, had less to do with the originality of its writing than with its resonance in the prevailing Zeitgeist. By the time "I Know Why" was published, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X were dead, and the only hope for black politics, it seemed, lay in the voices that were just beginning to be heard: those of such strong-willed female politicians as Shirley Chisholm and Barbara Jordan, two of the first black women to serve in Congress. Chisholm and Jordan, products of the colonial West Indies and the Old South, respectively, pinned their speeches to the idea of a changing United States, and it was their brand of rhetoric—a fierce criticism of the past blended with a kind of survivor's optimism, a belief in the future of the urban family—that cleared the way for Angelou's narrative of damage, perseverance, and eventual triumph.

There is no question that "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" was an important contribution to the wave of black feminist writing in the seventies. But in Angelou's five successive memoirs—"Gather Together in My Name" (1974), "Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas" (1977), "The Heart of a Woman" (1981), "All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes" (1986), and, this year, "A Song Flung Up to Heaven" (Random House; $22.95)—it has become clear that her real literary cohorts, at least in terms of affect, are not her politically minded contemporaries Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones but Anaïs Nin, whose diaries, published in the late sixties and early seventies, were also heralded as feminist works, the acute renderings of a woman's soul. Nin and Angelou are both theatrical writers—they use language, often with great aplomb, to describe and glorify a self that is fulfilled only when it is being observed. Both writers, in their early books, were pioneers of self-exposure, willing to turn a spotlight on their own sometimes questionable exploits and emotional shortcomings. While Angelou and Nin tended to be more interested in self-revelation than in politics or the feminist perspective, the unabashed female personae they presented freed many other women writers to open themselves up without shame to the eyes of the world.

Over the decades, Angelou's memoirs have remained more or less consistent in structure: each volume gives a historical overview of the area where Angelou was living at the time, and of blacks against the backdrop of the local white society; then Maya emerges, her story played out within the larger context. Or is she herself the larger context? Angelou's original goal—to tell the truth about the lives of black women—seems, after her first volume, to have evolved into something else: to document the ups and downs of her own life. The critic Selwyn Cudjoe writes of "Gather Together," "Angelou is still concerned with the questions of what it means to be black and female in America and exactly where she fits into the scheme of things. But her development is reflective of a particular type of black woman, located at a particular moment of history. . . . It is almost as though the incidents in the text were simply gathered together under the name of Maya Angelou but not so organized to achieve that complex level of signification that one expects in such a work."

In "Gather Together," we are in postwar California, where Maya lives for a time with her enterprising mother, who is now running a San Francisco boarding house. Angelou is seventeen, and a single mother herself. When she leaves home to work as a waitress in a bar in San Diego, she meets two lesbians, Beatrice and Johnnie Mae, who are in "the life." They take a shine to Maya, and she comes up with a plan: she'll pay the rent on their house, which they are about to lose, then she'll bribe white taxi-drivers to bring trade there and split the proceeds with the girls, fifty-fifty. The plan works—for a while. But, whores being whores, the girls start doing business behind their madam's back, and when Angelou finds out that they have been turning extra tricks and pocketing the cash she calls it quits. She then gets a job as a fry cook at a restaurant in Stockton, where she meets an older black man named L.D., who likes her to dress like a schoolgirl and takes her for drives in his sedan to visit other women. Lonely and lovesick, Angelou doesn't realize that those women are turning tricks for L.D. until she herself is doing the same—to help her "Daddy" repay a gambling debt. Finally, after her son, Guy, is briefly abducted by the woman she has trusted to care for him, Angelou flees back to the Bay Area. There she becomes friends with a sweet young junkie named Troubadour Martin. She offers to shoot heroin with him, but he dissuades her, explaining that she has a higher calling. "I had no idea what I was going to make of my life, but I had given a promise and found my innocence," Angelou writes. "I swore I'd never lose it again." She was nineteen.

"Gather Together" retains some of the freshness of voice of "I Know Why," but it also exhibits a new self-consciousness. Angelou replaces the language of social history with the language of therapy. ("I was anxious over the plight of lesbians during the time I was consumed with fear that I might be an incipient one," she writes. "Their importance to me had diminished in direct relationship to my assurance that I was not.") And it is the secondary characters who pay the price for her psychological self-involvement. Although she spends much of her time detailing her encounters with other people, they are presented, for the most part, with the deft superficiality of a stage description. Beatrice is "a short yellow woman whose role seemed to be straight man to Johnnie Mae's unfunny but loud humor." Angelou's sister-in-law is "a small, smiling brown-skinned girl who had been our classmate," and whose "happy love and soft laughter had come just in time." Angelou's boss is "a large, gentle man who smiled a lot at life. . . . His clothes were tailor-made, and he wore them with a casual flair." Angelou's writing is reactive, not reflective, and the people who come into her life function primarily as props in the ongoing drama of Maya Angelou.

In her fourth volume, "The Heart of a Woman," Angelou recounts a 1957 encounter with the crusty and vulnerable Billie Holiday, who had been introduced to her by a mutual friend:

> On the night before she was leaving for New York, she told Guy she was going to sing "Strange Fruit" as her last song. . . .
>
> Billie talked and sang in a hoarse, dry tone the well-known protest song. Her rasping voice and phrasing literally enchanted me. I saw the black bodies hanging from Southern trees. I saw the lynch victims' blood glide from the leaves down the trunks and onto the roots. . . .
>
> Guy broke into her song. "What's a pastoral scene, Miss Holiday?" Billie looked up slowly and studied Guy for a second. Her face became cruel, and when she spoke her voice was scornful. "It means when the crackers are killing the niggers. It means when they take a little nigger like you and snatch off his nuts and shove them down his goddam throat. That's what it means."

Holiday is one of the best-drawn characters in Angelou's books. But, by showing what an extraordinary woman can do, Angelou unwittingly reveals her own shortcomings. By the time she met Holiday, Angelou had followed the fashion of the time: she was a calypso singer, soon to cut an album entitled "Miss Calypso." But it was clear that the album itself was not the point. Developing her artistry was not the point. Fame, not art, was her spur—a fact that Holiday recognized instantly. After walking out in the middle of Angelou's calypso act, Holiday told her, "You want to be famous, don't you? . . . You're going to be famous. But it won't be for singing." From then on, Angelou spent little time deliberating on the forms of her "self-expression." She made sure to call herself not a singer or a writer but an "entertainer." She sang; she danced; she wrote stories and plays; she acted; she composed incidental music. But what can one make of this blur of activity? It reveals ambition, certainly, but also, sadly, a woman who is only moderately talented and perpetually unable to understand who she is.

In her memoirs, Angelou never attains the level of self-knowledge that made Holiday the artist she was. She was too careful, despite the mistakes she had made in her youth, and too much in need of approval. Could Billie Holiday have sung the way she did if she had accepted the limits of convention? Angelou did accept them. She aspired only to the traditional female roles (mother, wife), and she was determined to do whatever it took to fulfill her dream of the white picket fence. In "Gather Together," Angelou imagines a happy life:

> I would get an apartment and furnish it with the ragingly popular blond furniture. My bedroom was to tremble with pink frills and lacy ruffles. My son's would be painted yellow and white, with decals of happy animals climbing the walls, expensive toys stacked neatly in the corner, and he would sit at a cute little table learning from clever educative books. Home-baked breads would give the kitchen a solid country air.

Of those who have chosen less orderly paths, Angelou is intolerant, sometimes contemptuous. Beatrice and Johnnie Mae, she writes, "were lesbians, which was sinful enough, but they were also inconsiderate, stupid bitches." Describing Holiday's first visit to her home, she says:

> The reality of Lady Day coming to my house slammed into me and started my body to quaking. It was pretty well known that she used heavy drugs, and I hardly smoked grass anymore. How could I tell her she couldn't shoot up or sniff up in my house? It was also rumored that she had lesbian affairs. If she propositioned me, how could I reject her without making her think I was rejecting her? . . . I saw her through the screen door, and my

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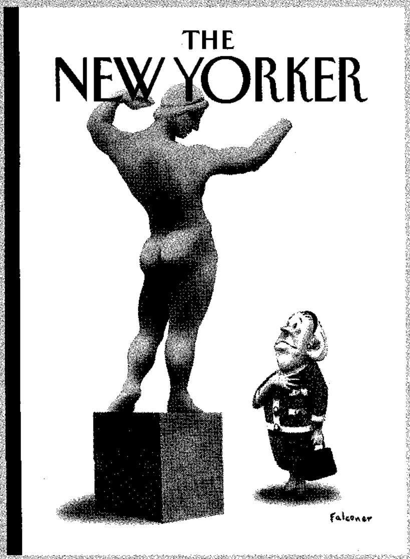

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> nervousness turned quickly to shock. The bloated face held only a shadow of its familiar prettiness. When she walked into the house, her eyes were a flat black, and . . . her hand lay in mine like a child's rubber toy.

Angelou writes from the vantage point of a woman who has compromised nearly everything, and for what? To judge those who haven't? This sanctimoniousness clouds virtually all her work, despite its readability.

And it *is* readable. Angelou followed "Gather Together" with a serial soap opera that fascinates in the compulsive way that soap operas do. The four subsequent books take her to California, Hawaii, New York, and Africa. We discover how, after a brief marriage to a Greek sailor named Tosh Angelos, she got a job as a dancer with a State Department-sponsored production of "Porgy and Bess," how that show led to other connections, and how she eventually joined the Harlem Writers Guild, which was headed by the novelist John O. Killens. With Killens, she helped to organize the legendary 1960 Cabaret for Freedom, at the Village Gate jazz club, to benefit Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, whose Northern coördinator, the brilliant Bayard Rustin, impressed by Angelou's protean industry and pluck, appointed her his successor as head of the New York branch. In 1961, she met Vusumzi Make, a South African dissident lawyer, who spirited her away to Cairo, where she began to publish her work in a small nationalist magazine, while playing official wife to Make, who had become a political leader in exile.

In the latest installment, "A Song Flung Up to Heaven," we see Angelou leaving that relationship and returning from Africa, in 1964, at the invitation of Malcolm X. He had a mission for her—or did he? It is never quite clear whether he asked her to join him or she offered herself up. "Malcolm X, on his last visit to Accra, had announced a desire to create a foundation he called the Organization of African-American Unity," she explains. "The idea was so stimulating to the community of African-American residents that I persuaded myself I should return to the States to help establish the organization. . . . When I informed [others] that I had started making plans to go back to America to work with Malcolm, they—my friends, buddies, pals—began to treat me as if I had suddenly become special. . . . My stature had definitely increased." When she arrives in the States, however, Angelou postpones her meeting with Malcolm X for a month. He is assassinated two days later, and Maya returns to her night-club act. Eventually, she becomes a market researcher in the Watts district of Los Angeles, where her work is interrupted by the 1965 riots. (On her third day of avoiding the riots, Angelou recalls her mother's saying, "Nothing's wrong with going to jail for something you believe in," and decides to return to Watts, "ready to be arrested," but no policemen take the bait.) At the end of the book, Martin Luther King asks Angelou to take a trip around the country to promote the S.C.L.C. She agrees somewhat reluctantly, but again postpones—this time in order to throw herself a birthday party. Five weeks later, on her birthday, King is assassinated.

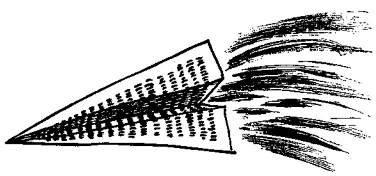
"A Song Flung Up to Heaven" differs from the preceding volumes only in Angelou's ever-increasing unreliability. Although she played a role in promoting the S.C.L.C. and other civil-rights organizations of the sixties, it was a minor one, and Angelou's writing strays far from the radicalism of her contemporaries. In these six books, she has given us instead the self-aggrandizing, homespun, and sometimes oddly prudish story of a black woman who, when faced with the trials of life, simply makes do. The publication, in the nineties, of what can best be described as Angelou's wisdom books—"Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now" and "Even the Stars Look Lonesome"—seems a more natural culmination of her work. Collections of homilies strung together with autobiographical texts, they stress the all-important "inner" journey. "The woman who survives intact and happy must be at once tender and tough," Angelou writes in "Wouldn't Take Nothing." "She must have convinced herself, or be in the unending process of convincing herself, that she, her values, and her choices are important." Angelou's memoirs are ample evidence that she has convinced herself of this. Her readers are another matter. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Fragrant Harbor, *by John Lanchester (Putnam; $25.95).* The title of this ambitious historical novel is a translation of the name Hong Kong and, as one character explains, a "Chinese joke": when Tom Stewart, a twenty-two-year-old Englishman, sails into Hong Kong harbor in 1935, he finds the waters polluted and the city hopelessly corrupt. A publican's son, he reinvents himself as a hotelier and spies for the Empire during the Japanese occupation, all the while keeping silent about his passion for a Chinese nun whom he met on the ship from England. Two present-day narratives bookend Tom's story, one by an on-the-make female British journalist, the other by a Chinese businessman whose family fled the mainland during the Cultural Revolution. The most vital character, however, is Hong Kong itself, brought noisily to life as a city of permanent rootlessness, where inhabitants identify themselves, even after decades, as expatriates and refugees.

Man Walks Into a Room, *by Nicole Krauss (Doubleday; $23.95).* When a tumor in his brain is discovered and removed, Samson Greene, an English professor in his thirties, finds himself afflicted by a peculiar kind of amnesia: he cannot remember anything that happened after he was twelve. Even as he struggles to connect with his wife, Anna, he thinks that he might prefer the blankness of his new life. Samson's loss takes place against a backdrop of secret experiments on human memory and the social implications of atomic testing, but it is his shadow-filled scrutiny of intimacy—as he wonders why he might have married this beautiful stranger, and whether he can love her—that is the book's real strength.

Life of Pi, *by Yann Martel (Harcourt; $25).* An impassioned defense of zoos, a death-defying trans-Pacific sea adventure à la "Kon-Tiki," and a hilarious shaggy-dog story starring a four-hundred-and-fifty-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker: this audacious novel manages to be all of these as it tells the improbable survivor's tale of Pi Patel, a young Indian fellow named for a swimming pool (his full first name is Piscine) who endures seven months in a lifeboat with only a hungry, outsized feline for company. This breezily aphoristic, unapologetically twee saga of man and cat is a convincing hands-on, how-to guide for dealing with what Pi calls, with typically understated brio, "major lifeboat pests."



Spring Flowers, Spring Frost, *by Ismail Kadare, translated from the original Albanian into French by Jusuf Vrioni and from the French by David Bellos (Arcade; $23.95).* Mark Gurabardhi, an artist in his late twenties, experiences the unfamiliarity of life after Communism in the provincial Albanian town where he was posted by the former regime. It feels almost like a loss not to be spied on, and he and his girlfriend thrill to words like "heist," so modern and Western do they seem. The couple discover, however, that dictatorship is replaced not so much by modernity as by old, crippling superstitions and family feuds. Throughout the book, images of icebergs, the Titanic, and enchanted snakes recur, all of which may represent Albania and its various misguided governors. The result is like a dream—seemingly full of stirring meanings whose interpretations remain tantalizingly out of reach.

A Beaker: New and Selected Poems, *by Caroline Knox (Verse; $14).* The hyperliterate Knox invites readers to "walk on the topos of previous perishing / literary remarks about mortality and mutability." She uses "Nortony" as a pejorative and name-drops the Harvard rare-books library. She is often obscure, but her allusions are as much a sign of camaraderie as of scholarly pretension, her poems a pert crystallization impossible in more narrative poetry. "Our brains are made of marbles," she writes, "and a game / is always going on inside our skulls."

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POP MUSIC

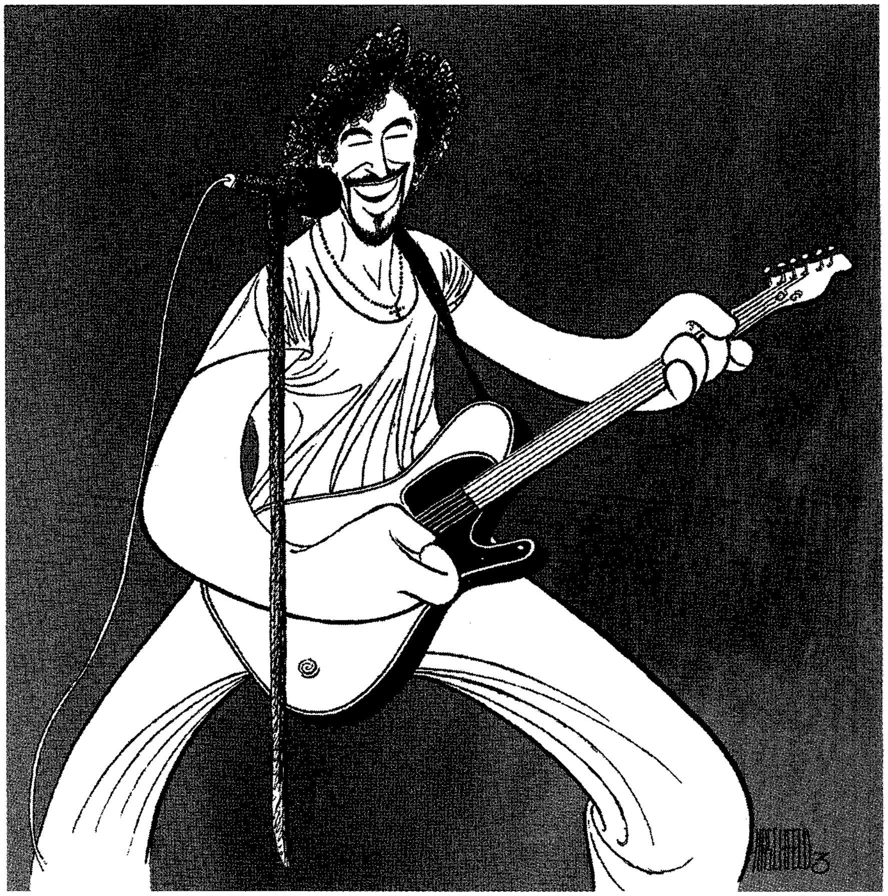
THE MISSING

On his new album, Bruce Springsteen tries to capture the mood of the nation.

BY ALAN LIGHT

If there was ever a moment for Bruce Springsteen to take back his place at rock's center stage, this would be it. His last album of new work, "The Ghost of Tom Joad," came out seven years ago, in 1995. After that—despite an extensive world tour in 1999 and 2000—he struggled to find a subject or a sound compelling enough to build an album around. Then came the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center. In the months that followed, Springsteen wrote and recorded thirteen new songs; they have now been released, along with two tracks that were written earlier, as an album called "The Rising." This seems to set the stage for a familiar scenario: the rock veteran's triumphant return to relevance, form, and, ultimately, Grammy recognition (see Bob Dylan, Santana, and U2). But instead of writing the album that would undoubtedly have put him back in the spotlight—a "Born in the U.S.A." for the new era—Springsteen came up with something riskier and more surprising, something more than the country's archetypal living rock star fulfilling his obligation as America's rock-and-roll conscience.

From the start, Springsteen's songs have reflected a tension between his obsessive love of rock and his respect for the simple, direct power of folk music, leading to both the majestic scope of "Born to Run" and the quiet intensity and Woody Guthrie-inspired moralism of "Nebraska" and "The Ghost of Tom Joad." Anthemic, operatic epics like "Thunder Road" and "Jungleland" seemed, in their expansiveness, to invoke the complete history of rock and roll, and helped him break through to a mass audience. And songs like "The River" and "Badlands" achieved a near-perfect balance between despair and defiance, drawing as much on John Steinbeck and John Ford as on Chuck Berry. After "Born in the U.S.A." (1984) sold fifteen million copies and established Springsteen as a pumped-up, dressed-down, blue-collar megastar, he pulled back, turning to honed parables of immigrant experience and small-town American life set against intimate musical backdrops. Today, he is among the world's greatest rock icons, but he has had only one album reach No. 1 on the charts since "Tunnel of Love" (1987), and it was a greatest-hits album released in 1995.



Springsteen's songs have always been about survival, not victimhood.

"The Rising" sounds like nothing Springsteen has ever done before. Although this is his first studio album in eighteen years to draw on the full power of the E Street Band, its producer, Brendan O'Brien, didn't go for a live, classic-rock-band approach. Instead, Springsteen sings over dense, constructed blocks of sound, heavy on strings and stacked guitars, light on Clarence (Big Man) Clemons barroom sax solos. His voice seldom rises to that strained, fever pitch familiar from his arena concerts. The lovely, gentle sway of "You're Missing" is one of the most delicate tracks he's ever recorded, whereas the Middle Eastern texture and slashing guitar of "Worlds Apart" bring to mind Sting or Peter Gabriel. Even "Mary's Place," the one song on the album that sounds like a classic E Street "Rosalita"-style barn burner, never reaches the rave-up heights we expect. The song, which describes a gathering at a party or a bar, comes to a break about two-thirds of the way in, and turns into a chorus singing "Turn it up!" This is the part in a Springsteen song when the music should lift off irresistibly—but nothing happens. The chorus repeats for a few more minutes and then fades out, as if Springsteen just can't find a way to give in to joyous rock-and-roll release.

The lyrics are even more atypical than the sound. All the signature Springsteen narrative and detail has been stripped out: there is not a single Joe Roberts or Bill Horton wrestling with his conflicts, no

Crazy Janey or Magic Rat, no working on the highway or racing in the street. The language is bare, almost generic; words and images repeat from song to song. The five songs that most explicitly evoke the attacks—"Into the Fire," "Empty Sky," "You're Missing," "The Rising," and "My City of Ruins"—reduce the events to an anonymous domestic fragment ("Just an empty impression / In the bed where you used to be," or "Coffee cup's on the counter, jacket's on the chair / Paper's on the doorstep, but you're not there"). Rather than tell individual stories as allegories of a broader social condition (the way the characters on "Born in the U.S.A." and "Nebraska" chronicled the fallout from Reaganomics), Springsteen seems to be striving for something universal to capture the mood of the whole nation. Language that strives for universality can often lapse into imprecision, though, and in some cases Springsteen's decision to avoid fully fleshed-out stories plays away from his greatest strength: without his finely observed narratives, bouncy, doo-wop flavored cuts like "Waitin' on a Sunny Day" and "Let's Be Friends (Skin to Skin)" seem lightweight—pleasant, if minor, lookin'-for-love songs with dark undercurrents.

But, more often than not, Springsteen achieves moments of understated eloquence and grace. Sudden flashes of elevated symbolism recall the mystic vocabulary of early albums ("On the plains of Jordan, I cut my bow from the wood / Of this tree of evil, of this tree of good," he sings on "Empty Sky"); the dual mythologies of religion and rock and roll have long run together in Springsteen's work. On his last tour, he promised concertgoers "a rock-and-roll baptism." But now the language of faith and redemption seems to have assumed a more sober meaning for him; "Fire," "Ruins," and the title track all culminate in rousing, life-affirming prayer.

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"The Rising" contains none of the political engagement we might have expected to find on a Bruce Springsteen 9/11 album. In fact, this is ultimately an album about love. "The Fuse" and "Let's Be Friends (Skin to Skin)" have a sexual heat that has mostly been absent from Springsteen's work. On songs such as "Worlds Apart" and "Lonesome Day," which address the limitations of relationships, we see more fully how the world after September 11th has lent an urgency to themes of independence that have often been present in Springsteen's writing. "You're afraid to love something so much, you're afraid to be in that love," Springsteen said in 1992, describing the tensions in his offstage life that surfaced on the albums "Lucky Town" and "Human Touch." "Because a world of fear leaps upon you, particularly in the world that we live in. . . . My specialty was keeping my distance, so that if I lost something, it wouldn't hurt that much."

Despite the new sonic and lyrical direction of "The Rising," there is no mistaking its resonances with Springsteen's earlier work. The indelible connection between grief and joy—an ongoing preoccupation of Springsteen's—lies behind every one of the songs, including those written before the attacks. ("My City of Ruins," which Springsteen performed during the "Tribute to Heroes" telethon on September 21st, was actually inspired by the disrepair of Asbury Park.) Springsteen has said that the narrator of the first verse in the spare, haunting "Paradise" is a female suicide bomber, but it's easy to miss that. What's clear is the song's sense of yearning for human connection, and a wish to "get to that place where we really wanna go," which Springsteen has been singing about since "Born to Run." "Worlds Apart" may refer to "Allah's blessed rain" and have a chanting chorus, sung by the Pakistani qawwali singer Asif Ali Khan and his group, but the troubled couple it describes could come straight off "Tunnel of Love."

All the songs on "The Rising" reach a point where the singer warily considers a future of being alone, and concludes, as Springsteen has again and again over the years, that perseverance is the greatest heroism. This album reflects a new sense of what it's like to live with mortality—after all, Springsteen, at fifty-two, is no longer young. But for him music has always been about survival, not victimhood. Twenty-two years ago, the night after John Lennon was murdered, Springsteen took the stage in Philadelphia. "It's a hard world that makes you live with things that are unlivable," he said. "And it's hard to come out here and play tonight, but there's nothing else to do." ♦

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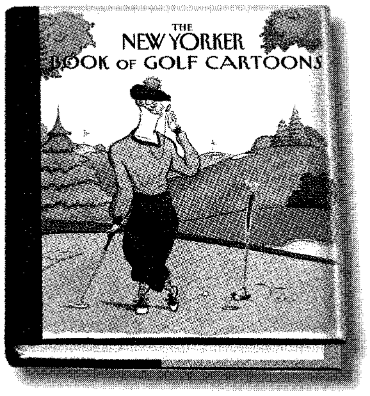

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

GOING WITH IT

"Full Frontal," "The Last Kiss."

BY DAVID DENBY

Now and then, big-time filmmakers undergo curious moments of confusion in which they imagine that what they are doing—concocting characters and emotions, then assembling the scenes in an artificial progression called a story—is somehow naughty or deceitful. They may think that the stories are merely manipulative, that the actors are phonies, that the writers, directors, and set designers are getting away with something. And, of course, they are. Yet no one wants them to get away with it more than the audience. It's not as if we don't know that we're being lied to. All we ask is that the lies yield some truth—dramatic, emotional, erotic, geographic, decorative—that interests us. "Full Frontal," which was put together by Steven Soderbergh in one of those strangely muddled moments, is perhaps the most naïvely awful movie I've seen from the hand of a major director. An attempted neo-Godardian deconstruction of cinematic reality, "Full Frontal," written by Coleman Hough, turns deconstruction into hash. Actors play actors who are making a movie within the movie, and half the time we can't tell whether we're in the inner or the outer movie or why we should care. "Full Frontal" is naïve because no matter how many levels of representation a director puts into his work, the finished product still has to add up to a coherent fiction of one kind or another. But "Full Frontal" adds up to nothing. There are a few intense moments in the movie within the movie in which Julia Roberts, playing a magazine reporter in Los Angeles, flirts with Blair Underwood, who plays a handsome TV actor about to get his big break, but the scenes don't go anywhere. Neither does Catherine Keener's smoldering rage as a self-hating personnel director who, for some reason, throws a plastic globe at her company's employees and demands that they name the countries in Africa. Everyone talks about a movie producer named Gus (David Duchovny), but all we find out about him is that he likes to semi-asphyxiate himself in order to prolong sexual pleasure. While the filmmakers were at it, why didn't they include a scene in which, say, a film critic eats guacamole on crackers as he listens to Alice Cooper's version of "Climb Ev'ry Mountain"? On what principle could you leave such a scene *out*? "Full Frontal" is the sort of arbitrary mess that gives experimentation a bad name. The news that the movie was shot on digital video and film in eighteen days, and that the actors drove themselves to the set and applied their own makeup, would have made a nice Sunday *Times* story if the movie were any good. But it isn't, so the low-budget austerities come off as the newest form of ostentation, like the vow of cinematic chastity taken by the publicity-seeking Dogme 95 crowd in Copenhagen. Soderbergh has always been a maverick, and after making three hits in a row ("Erin Brockovich," "Traffic," "Ocean's Eleven") he may have wanted to throw everyone off his back—the industry that always wants success, the critics who always want art, and the audience that always wants something it can enjoy. I think I can safely say that he achieved his ambition on all three counts.

The young men in the bittersweet Italian comedy "The Last Kiss" (opening on August 16th) could be described as the latest version of the buffoons in Fellini's early masterpiece

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"I Vitelloni" (1953)—spoiled children pushing thirty who are not much given to productive labor but are easily excited by fantasies and dreams. "The Last Kiss" takes place in Rome, though the setting could be any large Italian city in which hip, good-looking young people cadge off their parents, go to weddings, hang out, and make love a lot. The movie offers an intense, kaleidoscopic view of a close-knit group of pals, their girlfriends and wives, and a few of their equally restless elders. All the characters are longing for more in their lives—but more of what? One of the young men, Carlo (Stefano Accorsi), is struggling to avoid settling down with the possessive Giulia (Giovanna Mezzogiorno), who is pregnant. The others want to take off, vowing to journey across Africa—or perhaps sail to Turkey, where they will open a diving school on the coast to teach Turks, who can then go diving in Polynesia. *Anything* to escape mediocrity and impending middle age! The men wear rings in their lips and noses; they look like Barbary Coast pirates with jewelry in all the wrong places, and their dreams are about as solid as the champagne that they shake violently and then spritz into the air—an activity not so different from that of the two teen-age boys masturbating together in "Y Tu Mamá También." The writer-director, Gabriele Muccino, an apparent maestro at the age of thirty-five, treats the men's angst with great tenderness without in any way taking it seriously. Their noisy dissatisfaction is meant to be as shallow as it is extravagant and egotistical, which is why it's so funny. The women, by contrast, go deeper into their feelings; they're closer to real suffering. They want some sort of response from the men; they want them to shape up as lovers and husbands. But their squalls of temper are meant to be comical, too—outbursts of borderline hysteria which collapse in a heap.

Blair Underwood and Julia Roberts in Steven Soderbergh's "Full Frontal."

ERIC PALMA

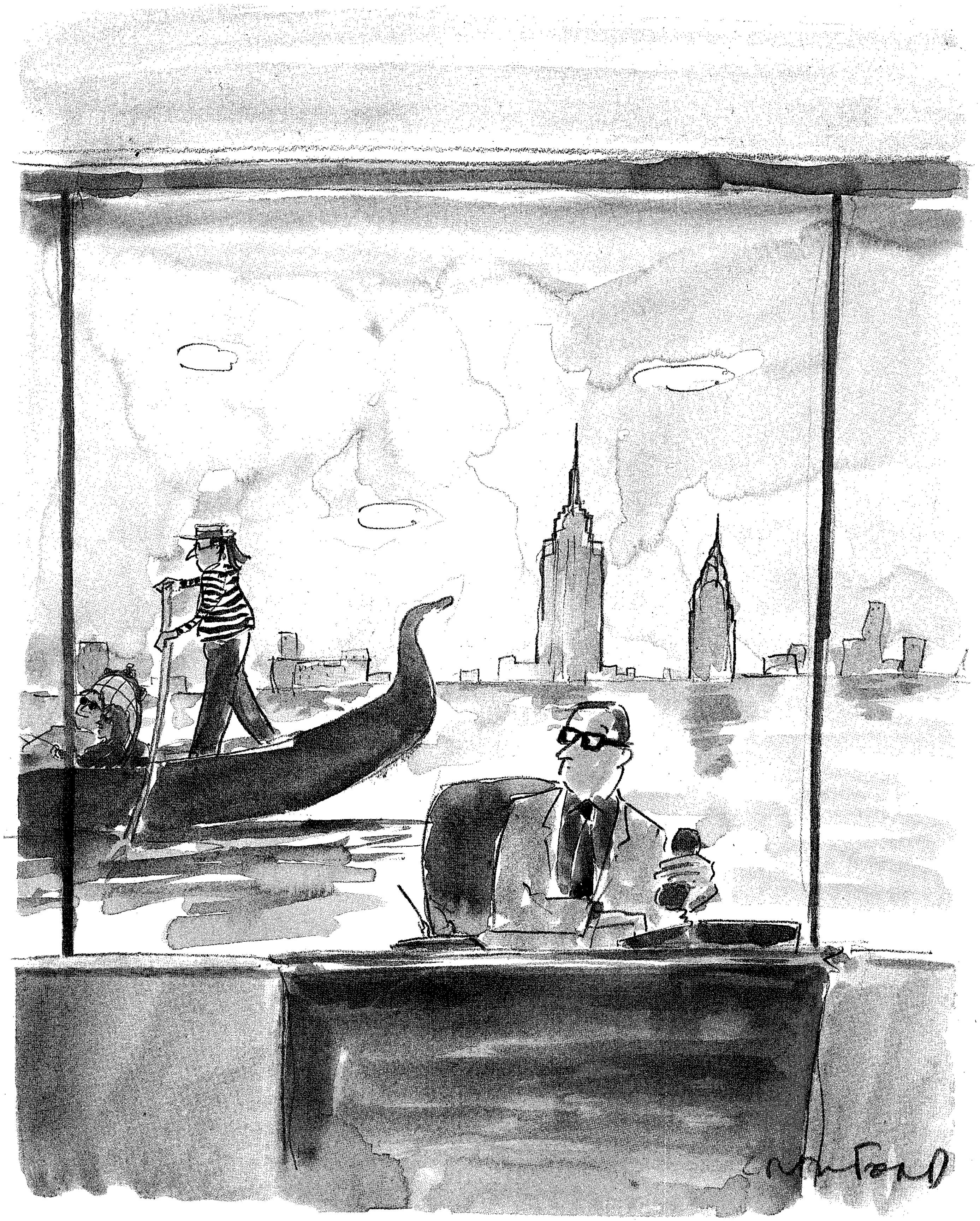
Irresistibly entertaining, "The Last Kiss" is driven forward by prodigious gifts of temperament—that blessed absence of self-consciousness which links Italian opera to Italian comedy and makes so much French and Anglo-American work seem guarded or skittish by comparison. Paolo (Claudio Santamaria), a young man with the eyes of a Renaissance cherub and a raffish black beard, can't accept that the woman he loves doesn't want him. He has become a ranting menace, but he has no idea that he's ludicrous. Not one of the characters sees himself as absurd.

"I Vitelloni" was melancholy and lyrical in tone, but this picture surges ahead in buffa style: everyone jabbers away and races around Rome as if propelled by jet fuel. Muccino is particularly good at lovers' quarrels, which he lets bloom into hilarious excess. Giulia's mother, Anna, played by the longtime star Stefania Sandrelli, is an aging beauty who is stuck with a passive-aggressive husband, a psychoanalyst so maddening in his self-assurance that Anna keeps knocking herself out against the wall of his silence. She bursts into a session he's holding with a patient and rages at him, and he comes alive at last; they go at each other in mounting paroxysms, and, by the end, one wants to stand up and cheer, as one might hail a great duet from "La Forza del Destino." What unites young and old in "The Last Kiss" is an unappeasable discontent and a habit of going over the top when in love. The sloe-eyed, sensual Giulia adores the conventionally handsome Carlo. But Carlo, fearing marriage and fatherhood, throws himself at a mere girl, the eighteen-year-old student Francesca (Martina Stella), who is as blandly pretty as a model in a toothpaste ad. Francesca is blissfully available, and Carlo slips into a bizarre erotic trance in which he cannot tell the difference between fantasy and love. Muccino maintains a double focus: the affair is both romantic and inane. And then he deepens the joke: the banal Francesca, with her little volume of Hermann Hesse and her tinkling amorous clichés, turns out to be capable of genuine passion and heartbreak.

"The Last Kiss" is a comic confection that features Italian design at its most golden and glamorous: beautiful people in beautifully lit apartments and houses, all of them making fools of themselves. The movie never loses momentum, yet it doesn't feel slammed together or hasty. Muccino keeps it very smooth and perfectly calibrated. He's a stunningly adept entertainer. Like a sly, eager suitor, his camera stays with the characters as they move around town; it greets them as they enter a corridor and then falls back as they move forward. Muccino has the companionability and the gliding fluency of Robert Altman, but "The Last Kiss" is an Altman-influenced movie made without the master's acrid bitterness. "The Last Kiss" may come out of Italian opera and comedy, but in spirit it's Shakespearean—objective, impassive, and at peace with a world in which men and women manage to be both ordinary and extraordinary. Muccino gently inquires: What would these excitable people do if they *had* freedom? And the rueful yet resonant answer is: There is always marriage, which is both prison and freedom at the same time. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY MICHAEL CRAWFORD

"Droughts will hit California and the Pacific Northwest. Sea levels are expected to rise 19 inches—which means you may need a gondola to get around Wall Street. And if you own coastal property, call your insurance broker." —*The New York Observer.*



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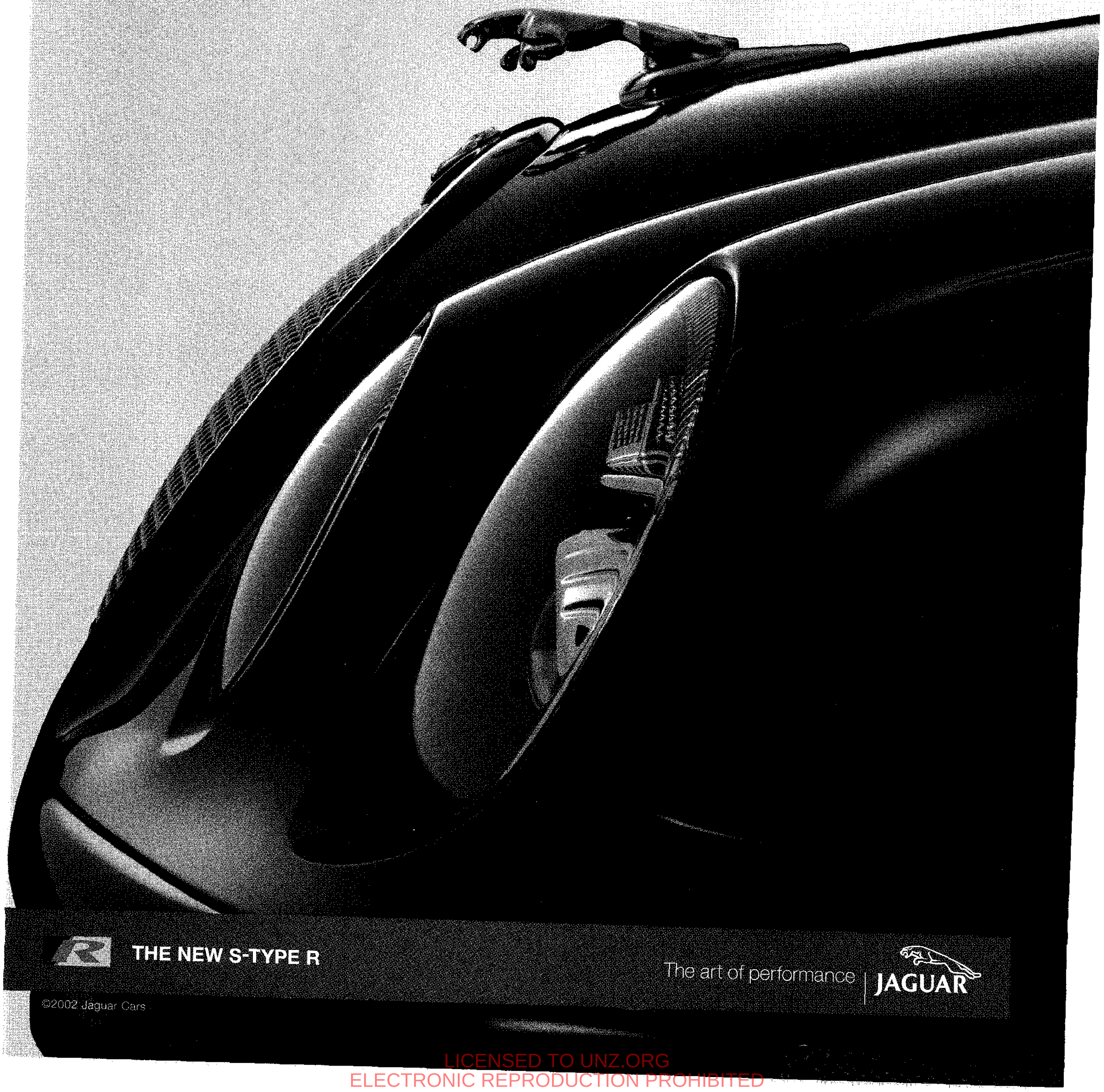

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